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## EUCHARISTIC ORIGINS



# EUCARISTIC ORIGINS

A SURVEY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT  
EVIDENCE

BRUCE LECTURES, 1928

BY

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## Preface

THE substance of the first four Chapters of this volume was delivered in a series of "Bruce Lectures" at the Theological College of the United Free Church, Glasgow, in the Spring of 1928. The remaining Chapters have since been added to complete the survey of the material in the New Testament bearing upon the Lord's Supper. At the moment the two most canvassed problems relating to the Sacraments are, firstly, the alleged centrality for New Testament doctrine of a somewhat crude sacramentalism, and, secondly, the question how far the Christian Sacraments, and in particular the Eucharist, date back to Jesus Himself and can be considered to have His authority. The present volume is offered as a study of these questions. During recent years several excellent books have appeared in English dealing with the Christian Doctrine and Religious Values of the Sacraments<sup>1</sup>, and important monographs on sacramental origins have been written by Continental scholars. But there seemed to be a place for a fresh survey in English of the New Testament evidence

<sup>1</sup> e.g., Canon O. C. Quick's *The Christian Sacraments* in *The Library of Constructive Theology*, and Dr. H. J. Wotherspoon's *Religious Values in the Sacraments*.

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which would be critical and historical rather than doctrinal, and would approach the subject from the side of exegesis rather than of theology. For the Scriptural quotations I have made much use of Dr. Moffatt's translation, and in the last Chapter I have drawn freely upon my Commentary on the Gospel of John (Moffatt New Testament Commentary) without thinking it necessary to trouble the reader with references. The Bibliography contains only the names of books to which direct reference is made in the text, and makes no claim to be either selective of the most important works or exhaustive of those which have been consulted. If I owe acknowledgment for indebtedness to any one book more than others it is to Maurice Goguel's "*L'Eucharistie des Origines à Justin Martyr.*"

G. H. C. MACGREGOR.

Glasgow.

Christmas, 1928.

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# EUCARISTIC ORIGINS

## CHAPTER I

### Introductory: Symbol, Sacrament, and Mystery

“A SACRAMENT,” so reads the Westminster Larger Catechism, “is a holy ordinance *instituted by Christ in His Church*, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those who are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of His mediation.” To-day the majority of historical students of the Christian Religion hold it doubtful whether Jesus actually “instituted sacraments” in the sense that He commanded them to be observed and intended them to be permanent, while Dean Inge is ready to “admit that Christ made no provision for a Church such as actually grew out of the little society of His followers.”<sup>1</sup> Moral principles and spiritual ideals, we are told, and not positive institutions like Church and Sacraments, are the notes of Jesus’ Gospel. The Christian Sacraments are but interesting survivals in the modern world of primitive rites of initiation and communion reintroduced by Paul into the purer religion of Jesus under the influence of the Mystery-cults of the Græco-Roman world. It may be worth while to ask once again, from the standpoint

<sup>1</sup> *Lay Thoughts of a Dean*, p. 29.

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of the historian and critic rather than of the dogmatic theologian : What is the evidence of the New Testament itself ? Did Jesus institute sacraments, in particular the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and if not what is our authority for their observance ? If sacramental teaching had no place in Jesus' own thought, how comes it to be so central for the early Church ? Is it because Paul, consciously or unconsciously, transformed a primitive Galilean Gospel into a Mystery-Religion like those which formed the dominant religious element in his Hellenistic environment ? On the evidence of the New Testament what precisely do the Sacraments effect, and what emphasis does each New Testament writer place upon them in his own interpretation of the religion of Jesus ?

The exploration of such questions involves both the study of comparative religion and also a detailed critical investigation of the teaching of each New Testament writer as compared and contrasted with his fellows. In both connexions a word of warning is necessary. The first is given by Dieterich in his *Mithras-liturgie* : "It is," he writes, "one of the worst faults of the science of Comparative Religion . . . to overlook the most natural explanations . . . in order to have recourse to the most far-fetched, and, by the most eccentric methods, to drag out analogies, which, to the unsophisticated eye, are absolutely invisible." The second caution comes to us from Bishop Gore : "Modern critical writers on the New Testament are, I cannot but think, too much intent on discerning

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and emphasising differences between the writers of the New Testament, and ignoring substantial identities, while at the same time they emphasise superficial similarities of language between the Christian and the pagan writers, ignoring profounder differences.”<sup>1</sup> Whatever the echoes between New Testament and pagan thought, there is a grand unity in the New Testament over against all its contemporaries. But if certain similarities to the ideas and institutions of Christianity do present themselves in the sacramental cults of many nations, so far from being disquieted, we shall remember, as Benjamin Jowett once put it, that “the glory of Christianity is not to be as unlike other religions as possible, but to be their perfection and fulfilment.”

Few subjects lend themselves more readily than do the Sacraments to haziness of thought and ambiguity of language. Indeed a certain merit has been claimed for that obscurity ! “At a certain stage of religious progress,” writes Gore, “it seems to be better not to attempt to think too accurately about the Holy Communion.” This vagueness has been largely due to the loose use, as an instrument of definition, of what is termed the “sacramental principle,” an idea which requires much stricter analysis than is usually given to it. With a view to showing that sacramental conceptions are rooted in the very constitution of the universe, and are therefore essential to any adequate religion, the term “sacramental” has been widened until it embraces

<sup>1</sup> *The Reconstruction of Belief*, p. 735 f.

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every conceivable relation of nature to spirit, of body to soul, of symbolism to reality. The sacrament has become nothing more than "the outward sign of spiritual content." The distinction between symbol and sacrament becomes almost obliterated when Gore tells us that "handshaking is the sacrament of friendship, kissing the sacrament of love, the flag the sacrament of the soldier's honour." On the other hand, in contrast to this very wide use of the word "sacramental," the conception is heightened to such an extent that we are told that by the "sacramental principle" is meant "the regular communication of the characteristic (Christian) gift through outward means : the embodiment of grace in ordinances : the designation of visible agents, acts, and substances to be the instruments and vehicles of divine virtue."<sup>1</sup> Clearly this is a "principle" quite distinct from the loose symbolism by analogy with which its validity is defended. Every sacrament is a symbol ; but not every symbol is a sacrament : it becomes so only when it fulfils an effective or instrumental as well as a purely symbolical or expressive function in the communication or appropriation of some gift of the higher religious life. It must be "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." It must be capable of being apprehended as a form of Divine action upon the soul which has efficacy as well as meaning. "Whoever says *Sacrament* says *grace* : for grace is the differentia of a Sacrament, by which it is more than a symbol."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paget, in *Lux Mundi*, p. 416.

<sup>2</sup> H. J. Wotherspoon, *Religious Values in the Sacraments*, p. 60.

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If it be asked what we mean by "grace," we may reply, again in the words of Dr. Wotherspoon, that in the main grace, as the word is used in the New Testament, has three aspects: firstly it is "that in the Divine Nature which leads God to bestow on man a salvation (to which man has no claim) which originates in Himself and proceeds only by His operation"; secondly, "it is the salvation itself, the pardon, the release, the acceptance in the Beloved"; and finally, "it is the forthflowing of power from God to give effect to His loving purpose in Christ, energising in the soul itself by the influx to it of the Holy Spirit." To this it must be added that "grace" in the New Testament sense of the word always involves a *personal* relationship of the divine to the human spirit: "We must beware of thinking of grace as a substantial *ens*—self-subsistent, separable from its source, transferable to its subject, and so becoming his possession. It is known to us only as a presence, as the operation in us of a presence, and as the result of that operation."<sup>1</sup> Thus Deissmann can define such spiritual operation, such New Testament "grace," simply as "the spiritual fellowship between Christ and His own."<sup>2</sup>

It is the recognition of this commerce of the divine personality with the human in "grace" which distinguishes Christian from non-Christian or "magical" sacramentalism. But there are rites which may be considered "sacramental" even if they be not so in the full Christian sense; and broadly speaking we may say that a symbol becomes

<sup>1</sup> H. J. Wotherspoon, *Religious Values in the Sacraments*, pp. 66, 74 f.

<sup>2</sup> St. Paul, p. 130.

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a sacrament when in the view of the participant it is instrumental in securing for the soul, or at least bringing within its reach, a gift or effect which corresponds to the significance of the symbol. Without prejudging the true significance of the Christian rites as such it may be argued that the word "sacrament" ought to be used only in this more limited and "higher" sense. The word is the equivalent used in the old Latin versions for the Greek *μυστήριον*, a word which Paul frequently uses of his gospel but curiously, and perhaps significantly, never applies, where we might most expect to find it, to either Baptism or the Eucharist. The word "sacrament" is first used of the Christian rites by Tertullian, and by that time simply meant a "mystery" and carried with it many of the associations of contemporary Mystery-rites.

It is then in this narrower and higher sense defined above that the word "sacramental" will be used throughout these studies, and that we shall speak of this or that writer being a "sacramentalist." We prefer to use this word "to express one who believes in spiritual gifts being really bestowed through the external forms" rather than the word "sacramentarian," which ought to have been retained in its historical meaning "as another name for those who, in opposition to Luther, held a merely symbolical view of the Eucharist."<sup>1</sup> Such "sacramental" tendencies have been eagerly traced in the New Testament alike by Catholic Apologists and the "religious-historical" school of criticism.

<sup>1</sup> See Gore, *The Reconstruction of Belief*, p. 744, n.

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Thus Bishop Gore, writing from the point of view of Anglo-Catholicism, says : “ What I am seeking to do in these pages is only to make evident that the Church from its origin was unmistakably and deeply sacramental—that it certainly believed in divine gifts ministered through earthly rites ” ; and again, “ Modern critics such as would assimilate the Church to the Mysteries are quite right in affirming that St. Paul (and the other New Testament writers) believed in Baptism as acting *ex opere operato*, if by that is meant simply that he believed a real change of spiritual status to be wrought in all cases through the visible rite.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly Dr. Wotherspoon as a representative of “ High-Church ” Presbyterianism writes : “ Among the discoveries of modern criticism one is that sacramentalism is both scriptural and primitive, and that the teaching of the chief apostles, as recorded, is of the type which we call Catholic, as truly as it is evangelical.”<sup>2</sup> And in this respect it must be confessed that the critic has made common cause with the “ Catholic ” with whom so often he finds himself at variance. Dr. Kirsopp Lake is typical : “ It is impossible to pretend to ignore the fact that much of the controversy between Catholic and Protestant theologians has found its centre in the doctrine of the Eucharist, and the latter have appealed to primitive Christianity to support their views. From their point of view the appeal fails : the Catholic doctrine is much more nearly primitive than the Protestant.” But how awkward an ally

<sup>1</sup> See Gore, *The Reconstruction of Belief*, pp. 755 f., 747.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. vi.

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the critic is likely to prove to the Catholic appears when Lake continues : " But the Catholic advocate in winning his case has proved still more : the type of doctrine which he defends is not only primitive, but pre-Christian."<sup>1</sup> Similarly Weinel comes forward as an ally, only to betray : " There is but one true explanation of sacraments, the Catholic and the Lutheran ; all others, especially all modern theological explanations, are but compromises and modifications of *this pre-Christian idea*, the contradiction of which with our religion we have felt since the Reformation in an ever-increasing degree."<sup>2</sup> In other words fully developed " Catholicism " is a syncretism of Christianity not merely with the higher forms of contemporary paganism, but with elements of crude superstition which lie at the root of human nature. When the elements in the Eucharist are " transubstantiated " we enter at once into the realm of primitive magic ; and when " Reservation " is practised for purposes of adoration, we are harking back to nothing less than fetishism and idolatry.

The problem which will lie behind all our study of the Eucharist and on which we hope that light will be cast by that study is well stated in this further paragraph by Dr. Lake : " Many critics of the highest standing among Protestant theologians would . . . maintain that primitive Christianity was not centrally sacramental. Such theologians believe that a purely symbolical and

<sup>1</sup> *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Paul*, p. 116 f.

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subjective doctrine of baptism and other sacraments is not only desirable for the present day, but also true to primitive thought. I incline to the view that this position has received its death-blow from the modern study of the history of religions ; and the theologian of the present and future will be obliged to distinguish more clearly than his predecessors between the primitive origin and the permanent validity of the various factors of thought and practice which constitute historic Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> Certain sacramental traits and tendencies we shall undoubtedly discover in the New Testament. Is this due to the fact that Christianity was from the first “centrally sacramental,” or to the presence within the New Testament of non-primitive elements which are to be explained by the gradual assimilation of primitive Christianity to its contemporary non-Christian environment ?

Not a few modern scholars have seen fit to read into the New Testament, and particularly into the Pauline letters, the crudest sacramentalism. Christianity for Paul is simply a new “Mystery.” Thus Loisy for example can write—after an account of the pagan Mysteries : “What concerns us is to ascertain how the Christianity which displaced them was also a Mystery, conceived in its general lines on the same model as those of which we have just been speaking.”<sup>2</sup> Naturally the point of contact between primitive Christianity and the Mysteries has been found in the sacramentalism which is supposed to dominate both.

<sup>1</sup> *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911.

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Of the Mystery-Religions themselves any lengthy discussion would be out of place here, and it will be enough to allude to certain sacramental tendencies conspicuous in them which are alleged to be reproduced in New Testament teaching. The virtue of the sacramental rite is universally thought to lie, not purely in the spiritual experience which it symbolises, but in the rite "of itself." As Dr. Angus puts it : "Though the subjective estate, with its mystic experiences, visions, and auto-suggestion, was the real 'mystery' sought after and, by many, attained, meticulous importance was attached to the formality of the *dromena* or cult transactions. . . . The *action* was to the ancient mind, as it is to many modern minds, a sacramental constituent of the whole spiritual experience." Again, though doubtless it would be a mistake to judge even paganism by its averages, it must be confessed that generally speaking in the Mystery-cults "sacraments, instead of being means of grace conditioned wholly by the spiritual receptivity of the participants, become virtuous in their own right, their efficacy resting upon an *opus operatum*." Faith, if predicated at all, is merely credulity in the efficacy of the rite. Finally the "mystery" conception of "regeneration" implies what can only be called a semi-physical interpretation of the gift bestowed in the sacrament. The moral element, when contemplated at all, was in the background. The vital matter was that the initiate became partaker of a divine essence : "The conception went back ultimately to a crude and even physical belief in a

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divine ‘begetting,’ by which men became sons of God.”<sup>1</sup>

It is no doubt tempting to trace similar tendencies within the New Testament. Nor does it require exceptional acumen to do so. Certain it is that with the influx of heathen converts the Christian community would be flooded with quasi-magical notions of religion absorbed from the atmosphere of the Mystery-cults. Moreover Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, on account of their outward similarity to parallel pagan rites, would readily form what Anrich has called “crystallisation-points” around which such conceptions would gather. How far the Eucharist has become such a “point” will be one of the questions continually before us in these studies.

One further consideration must be kept in mind in any attempt to estimate sacramental tendencies and in general to define the relation of symbol to effective spiritual experience in New Testament teaching on the Sacraments. It is that in the religious realism of the day the line of demarcation between sign and thing signified was seldom distinctly drawn. To quote Pfleiderer, “the contradiction which our analytic thought is accustomed to find between the nature of an inner spiritual process and its mediation through an outward sensible act, has for ancient thought in general, and the period of the Mysteries in particular, no existence. Instead, we may say, that our difficulties on this point would have been quite unintelligible to the men of that time, for it

<sup>1</sup> Angus, *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, pp. 59, 254, 96.

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appeared to them as self-evident that a real inward experience must also be visibly represented by a corresponding outward event, and that just in this mystic interplay of inward and outward consisted the significance of all cultus-ceremonies.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly Harnack is probably right when he insists that in the thought of the day about sacraments “so far as we are able to judge no one felt that there was a *problem* here, no one enquired whether this relation was realistic or symbolical. The symbol is the mystery, and the mystery was not conceivable without a symbol. What we now-a-days understand by ‘symbol’ is a thing which is not that which it represents; at that time symbol denoted a thing which, in some kind of sense, really is what it signifies.” Accordingly it may well be that we demand too rigidly from our authorities a distinction, which they themselves might hardly have recognised or understood, between a symbolic and a realistic conception of the Sacraments. What appears to us as a materialistic or even crudely magical sacramentalism may in fact be largely due to inexactness of language and imperfection of psychological analysis. We must remember too that the Jew in particular was not naturally philosophically minded. He had no delight in formulating metaphysical propositions and distinctions. And least of all have we any right to look to a Jew for a definition of the “sacramental.” “When we define sacrament as ‘an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace’ . . . we are at once within the

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Christianity*, iv. 231.

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realm of characteristically non-Jewish thinking," for the simple reason that it is characteristic of the Jew to bring "outward" and "inward," ceremonial and moral purity within the scope of one and the same law. This consideration will prove of no little importance when we come in particular to study Paul's sacramental doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gavin, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments*, p. 7.

## CHAPTER II

### The Antecedents and Occasion of the Last Supper

EVERY student of the antecedents of the Christian Eucharist will be impressed by the striking parallels offered by pagan institutions and practice. The early Christians themselves were quick to note these similarities, and indeed explained them as being due to demonic inspiration!<sup>1</sup> To-day we are more likely to welcome them as a reminder that God “left not Himself without witness” among the least of His people. But we shall recall Cumont’s warning that analogies do not necessarily imply dependence, and our appreciation of a certain resemblance between Christian sacramental practice and that of other peoples outwith Israel will be no bar to the belief that Judaism, one day destined to come to its perfect fruit in the Christian Church, had a special vocation to be “the sacred school of the knowledge of God and of the spiritual life for all mankind.”

It is of importance clearly to define the nature and scope of our inquiry. Throughout we must start with facts and be careful always to distinguish between these facts and their interpretation. What was the nature and what the antecedents of the

<sup>1</sup> See Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, p. 159.

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Supper at which Jesus broke bread with His disciples ? What facts concerning the procedure at that Supper are given to us by our New Testament authorities ? How far may the writers' own conception of Eucharistic doctrine have modified their presentation of the facts ? In the light of such an analysis what are we to conclude as to Jesus' own purpose and teaching in the symbolic actions and words at the Supper ? Furthermore it will be necessary to trace the development of Jesus' own teaching in that of St. Paul and its evolution to the full Eucharistic doctrine of the later New Testament Church.

Where are we to look for the origin of the Christian Eucharist ? As in the case of Baptism three main views are held. It is an entirely new rite expressly instituted by Jesus. It was inherited and evolved by the Primitive Christian Church, at least by analogy, from current Jewish practice sanctioned and blessed by Jesus, and so transformed into a specifically Christian rite. It was based upon pure pagan Myth borrowed by the Church from the contemporary Mystery-Religions. Again as in the case of Baptism the middle line of investigation will prove to be the true one. There can be no doubt that the "Lord's Supper" of the Early Church (I Cor. xi. 20) is a direct lineal descendant of the "Last Supper" at which Jesus Himself presided, and in the case of Jesus Himself at any rate we may surely rule out all pagan influence. In view of the strength of the historical evidence the "myth-theory" will not hold water. Whatever may be said of its evolution the origin of the Eucharist can

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hardly be sought in Paganism, though the almost universal custom of holding common religious meals does much to explain the rapid spread of Eucharistic practice.

It will be well, however, to glance briefly in passing at the theory which seeks to draw parallels between the Christian Eucharist and similar sacramental rites in the syncretistic cults of the day. The starting point is the idea that all religions come under a general law of evolution and that, therefore, if we find striking analogies of faith and practice between two religions, even though no historic contact can be proved, we must conclude that they are two manifestations of the same law. Now one of the most universal and prominent rites of primitive religion is the cultic meal, implying not merely the common partaking of food by the god and the worshipper but also the idea that communion with the god can be secured by the actual partaking of the god by the worshipper ; that is to say, the offering of which the worshipper partakes is itself the god. Hence the theory that the origin of sacrifice is the desire to secure sacramental union between the worshipper and the god. The conception passes through various stages of development. There is the simple idea that sacrifice is the food of the gods by which they are strengthened and made benevolent to men ; the offering makes the god and the members of the worshipping tribe "guest-friends." Sometimes a portion of the offering is eaten by the worshippers themselves ; sometimes, if the sacrifice is a living creature, the whole of the

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flesh is eaten while the “life-spirit” is dedicated to the gods; sometimes the sacrificial food is thought to be the vehicle which can convey to the worshipper the qualities of strength and virtue belonging to the god to which it has been sacrificed. There is the totemic sacrifice whereby the savage communicant believes that in consuming the offering he consumes the totem also, thereby identifying himself with it and renewing in himself the totemic life—a magical rather than a religious conception and not a divine “sacrament” in the stricter sense, for the totem is not necessarily regarded as a god. There is the further development when the animal sacrificed is actually regarded as the incarnation of a god, so that the idea of communion by “eating the god” seems really to be present. Examples would be the alleged eating alive of the sacrificial ox in the Thracian orgiastic worship of Dionysos Sabazios, or Heitmüller’s famous illustration from the rites of the Aztecs who before sacrificing and eating a prisoner of war honoured him as a personification of the deity to whom the sacrifice was offered.<sup>1</sup> Finally there is the universal idea that by partaking of this common sacrificial meal a covenant is established whereby the members of the tribe are not only pledged to and united with their god, but also drawn into close bonds of fellowship one with another.

Now it is alleged that primitive Christianity is but another example of the working out of this general law of evolution. When in the Eucharistic ritual we find the words, “Take, eat, this is my

<sup>1</sup> Heitmüller, *Taufe und Abendmahl bei Paulus*, pp. 40-42.

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body . . . This is the covenant in my blood " we are face to face with this universal conception of a sacramental union achieved by "eating the god" and a communal "covenant" established by the rite.

But though the theory may be attractive as illustrating the solidarity of the human race it is a fallacy, while emphasising that which all religions have in common, to ignore that in which they are spontaneous, original, individual. Above all has Christianity a strong individuality of its own. All religions are by no means wholly analogous; and Christianity is more distinct from them all than they are from each other. As Maurice Goguel remarks,<sup>1</sup> one who thinks to explain Christianity entirely by the general laws governing the evolution of religion lays himself open to the charge of inability to lay hold of just that which is most characteristic of it. Nevertheless, as Goguel also remarks, "it is certainly not a mere chance that the communion meal, in a connection more or less close with sacrifice, appears in very different religions. The existence of an inward urge, which drives religion to express itself in a meal, explains without doubt the rapidity with which the Christian Eucharist developed and spread. It is certainly an important factor in the evolution with which we are concerned." Accordingly, though it is one thing to explain the propagation of a belief and quite another to explain its origin, it is not surprising that parallels with the Eucharist have been eagerly sought in the contemporary syncretistic cults.

<sup>1</sup> *L'Eucharistie*, p. 28.

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This is not the place to discuss at any length the relation of the Mystery-Religions to primitive Christianity, and we shall content ourselves with emphasising certain general cautions which are too often forgotten by investigators obsessed by the phenomena of Comparative Religion.

(1) Firstly the most convincing evidence drawn from the Mysteries is too late for our purpose. The Mystery-Religions did not attain their full development till the second century of our era, and by that time Christian sacramentalism was already born. The closest parallels are undoubtedly with Mithraism, in which the “soldiers” of Mithras united in a sacrament of bread and water mixed with wine, which to Christians appeared a travesty of the Lord’s Supper. But all the evidence from Mithraism is admittedly too late to furnish any help for the elucidation of the New Testament. Parallelism is far more probable than dependence or derivation.

(2) Secondly, the sacred meal was not the central rite of the Mysteries. With the possible exception of the Mithraic communion its position was quite subordinate, and we have probably been misled in our judgment of its importance by the prominence of the Eucharist in the Christian Church. As a matter of fact it was merely one step in the progress of the pagan initiate, a rite not so much of full communion as of initiation. The formula with reference to the Phrygian Mysteries preserved by Firmicus Maternus and (with variations) by Clement suggests this: “I have eaten out of the drum, I have drunk out of the cymbal, I have become an

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initiate of Attis.” The culminating point of communion, experienced by the Christian in the Eucharist, was reached not in the cultic meal, but in the crowning vision, the “*epopteia*.” If we seek the reason for the difference, the answer is that behind the Eucharist lay the historical Last Supper and the personality of a real “Saviour-God” who had lived a real life, and died on a real cross for the sin of the world.

(3) Thirdly, “the evidence regarding Sacramental Meals in the Mystery-Religions is both meagre and difficult to interpret,”<sup>1</sup> and it cannot be assumed that the crude idea of “eating the god” survived into the higher Mysteries. The idea of communion through sacramental eating was certainly present, but it has been too readily assumed that the elements of the sacrificial meal were always regarded as embodying the god worshipped, and that participation in them was accompanied by the idea that the god himself was eaten. In the case of the Eleusinian Mysteries, Farnell<sup>2</sup> is inclined to doubt whether the meal can even be considered sacramental: “still less is there any sign that the initiated believed that they were partaking through food of the divine substance of the divinity.” And though a stronger case might be made out for the orgiastic Phrygian and Thracian cults and for the Orphic mysteries, so great an authority as Mr. Edwyn Bevan considers it quite doubtful whether even here the crude realism

<sup>1</sup> Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions*, 256.

<sup>2</sup> *Cults of the Greek States*.

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of the old nature worship is fully present.<sup>1</sup> We conclude then that only in the earlier stages of the Mysteries, in connection with the Dionysos-Zagreus cult and the Phrygian worship of Cybele, was the idea of "eating the god" strictly present, and that, as Percy Gardner affirms, in the first Christian century "we cannot trace in any of the more respectable forms of heathen religion a survival of the practice of eating the deity."<sup>2</sup> It is much more likely that the sacramental fellowship was supposed to be established not by partaking *of* the god, but by partaking *with* him in a common sacrificial meal. Sometimes the god is regarded as host; in one papyrus<sup>3</sup> we read that "Chairemon invites you to dinner at the table of the Lord Serapis in the Serapæum tomorrow, the 15th, at the 9th hour." The phrase "table of the god" which frequently occurs in inscriptions presupposes the presence of the god as host. Sometimes the god is guest: e.g. Valerius Maximus states "at the banquet of Jupiter he himself was invited to the table, and Juno and Minerva were invited to dine."<sup>4</sup> Here possibly is an interesting parallel to such New Testament ideas as "I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." But for such a saying as that of the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel, "he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him," the explanation must, it seems,

<sup>1</sup> See quotation in Gore, *Reconstruction of Belief*, p. 725 f.

<sup>2</sup> *The Religious Experience of St. Paul*, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> *Pap. Oxyr.*, i., 110.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Angus, *Mystery Religions and Christianity*, p. 128, from Rohde, *Psyche*.

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be sought within the conceptions of the New Testament itself.

(4) It follows that derivation of New Testament sacramental doctrine directly from the Mysteries and its interpretation in a crudely realistic sense is possible only by supposing in Christianity a "throw-back" to more primitive conceptions already outgrown by contemporary pagan Mysteries. "A red-herring has been drawn across the trail of our investigation by the introduction of notions drawn from a lower and more barbarous source than the Mysteries."<sup>1</sup> "Do you imagine," asks Cicero, "that anybody is so insane as to believe that the thing he feeds upon is a god?" Yet it is suggested that just such a recrudescence of crude realism took place in primitive Christianity. "This belief and usage ('eating the god')," declares Heitmüller, "had a revival and a new lease of life."<sup>2</sup> "Rising from below," writes Dieterich, "the old ideas acquire new power. . . . The revolution from beneath creates new religious life within the primeval, indestructible forms."<sup>3</sup> This is prettily put, but it means in effect that we are asked in order to explain Christianity not merely to turn to the pagan Mysteries but to go back beyond the more refined Mysteries to crude and savage nature religion. We conclude with Clemen that "it is quite inconceivable that, without any other trace of its existence, the original belief in the possibility of receiving the

<sup>1</sup> Percy Gardner in *The Modern Churchman*, October, 1926, p. 323.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Religion in Geschichte u. Gegenwart*, Bd. i., sp. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Mithrasliturgie*, p. 107.

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god into oneself by partaking of food should have made its reappearance in the Christian Church and there alone. Accordingly, even this interpretation of the Lord's Supper, which in the New Testament is merely presupposed, is not traceable to pagan influences.”<sup>1</sup>

(5) Finally, if direct borrowing seems out of the question, is it legitimate to take refuge in Heitmüller's famous metaphor? After admitting that the argument for the direct dependence of the Eucharist on the Mysteries is precarious, he adds: “It will be safer to point to the general characteristics of the time, which abounded with ideas of that kind. The infant Christianity lived in an atmosphere which, if I may be allowed the expression, was impregnated with Mystery-bacilli.” But, as Schweitzer has remarked,<sup>2</sup> the metaphor is unscientific: it is not the atmosphere but the patient's system which becomes impregnated with bacilli, and even though the atmosphere could become so charged, there are those who by virtue of their peculiar constitution may remain immune. And such was the Judaism from which the primitive Christianity took its birth—exclusive, intolerant, jealous of its individuality to a degree, defiant of external contamination. However subject the early Gentile Church might be to the infection of the “Mystery-bacilli,” the circle of Jesus would certainly be immune. The circumstances in which He moved, the sources from which He drew His inspiration were

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Christianity and its non-Jewish Sources*, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> *Paul and His Interpreters*, p. 206.

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exclusively Jewish ; and, as so great an authority as Farnell has stated, "the institution of the Mysteries has not yet been proved for any Semitic religion." The Lord's Supper, whatever be said of its later development, may in its beginnings at least be accounted for on purely Jewish presuppositions.

But though we need not look to paganism for parallels to the Lord's Supper, the Last Supper of Jesus, and the rite which developed out of it, must not be regarded as an entirely new departure. Antecedents to it there are, though it is not in paganism that we are to look for them, but rather in contemporary Judaism. True, it may be argued with Bousset that "the Jewish Church generally had no knowledge of sacraments, if by sacrament we mean a sacred transaction in which the believers become participants in a supernatural gift of grace through material channels."<sup>1</sup> On this scholars are fairly generally agreed. "It must be admitted," writes Gore, "that sacramentalism was not a characteristic of the Jews. The Jews regarded their sacred rites as divine commands, elements in a covenant of God of which they were the subjects . . . But they did not regard them as instruments of spiritual grace."<sup>2</sup> Thus it is a real question whether there is in Judaism alone a sufficient basis for later sacramental Christianity. This must be discussed in relation to St. Paul. But for Jesus Himself the question does not arise ; for there is a measure of truth in Wellhausen's extreme dictum : "Jesus was

<sup>1</sup> *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*, rev. 1926, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> *Reconstruction of Belief*, p. 712.

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not a Christian : He was a Jew."<sup>1</sup> The person, the work, the teaching of Jesus are all wholly explicable on the basis of Hebrew, Palestinian Judaism ; Hellenistic influence, however necessary for the explanation of the growth and victory of Christianity under Paul and his successors, in the case of Jesus Himself may be entirely ignored. With Christian *origins* Hellenism has in fact nothing whatever to do, though it has a great deal to do with the *diffusion* of the Christian Church. The background and pre-suppositions of Jesus' own teaching must be considered to be wholly Jewish ; if Christian sacramental teaching in any sense dates back to Jesus Himself, then it must be asserted that, whatever the Hellenistic coloration taken on by the primitive rites, their basis is essentially Jewish. Christianity no doubt adopted much from Hellenism, but its sacraments were inherent in it from the first, though it may be that only by slow evolution did the original symbols acquire their full sacramental content.

The religious significance of a common meal was of course recognised by Judaism. The communal feast of the Passover was not only a confession of faith and a memorial of redemption : there is some evidence that it was also regarded as a means of communion with the nation's God. We must be careful indeed of reading into the Passover rites more than is strictly there, as when, e.g., Beer states that the "Paschal meal is a mystic meal which, working like a mysterious medicine, gives the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 363 ff.

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participants immunity for a year from all dangers, unites them with one another, and at the same time with their God, Yahweh.”<sup>1</sup> That doubtless is an extreme statement, as also is that of Keil when he writes that “the sacrifice has become a sacrament, the flesh of the offering a means of grace through which the Lord takes up His redeemed People into the fellowship of His own House and imparts to them the food of life for the quickening of the soul.”<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, though we may question Robertson Smith’s argument that even in the earliest times sacrifices were rites of communion, that sacrament (not sacrifice) is the essential idea of Semitic piety, yet it is surely significant that not the sacrifice of the Paschal victim in the Temple Courts, but the eating of it within the family circle was the central rite of the greatest of the Jewish feasts. To feast upon a victim previously sacrificed is among all peoples regarded as a means of holding fellowship with the god to whom the sacrifice is made.

Funeral feasts with a certain religious significance seem also to have been in vogue at this time among the Jews, in connection with which are found the expressions “bread of sorrow” and “cup of consolation.” It has been argued, with small probability, that the Christian “Agapé,” with its accompanying Eucharistic rites, may have developed out of such a funeral commemoration of Jesus. The argument fails, but at the same time provides

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the O.T.*, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> Keil, *Handbuch der biblische Archäologie*, I., p. 385; quoted by Gavin, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments*, p. 67.

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evidence of the religious emphasis put by Judaism on the common meal.<sup>1</sup>

Once again, the Essenes, according to Josephus,<sup>2</sup> had their food prepared for them by priests, went to their dining hall as though to a place of worship, and ate of their meal in such reverent silence that it seemed to the passer-by that some awful mystery was being celebrated within. But it must be admitted that there is no evidence whatever that the Essenes regarded such common repasts as a means of bringing them into communion with God.

But for our present purpose the most interesting illustration of the Jewish habit of gathering for religious meals is to be found in connection with the *Kiddûsh*, or weekly sanctification ceremony, which ushered in the Sabbath. Originally a ceremony observed at home, it was later transferred to the Synagogue, but in Jesus' day it appears still to have been celebrated in the home. Early on a Friday afternoon groups of friends ("Chabûrôth") would meet in the house of one of their number and partake of a social meal. About these gatherings the atmosphere would be distinctly religious, the topics of conversation would be of a religious character, and finally when the Sabbath was about to commence the president took a cup of wine and said over it a benediction for what was called the "sanctification of the day"—"Kedûshath ha-yôm." Of this ceremony we shall have a good deal more to say below.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Oesterley : *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> B.J., ii. 8. 5, 8. Ant. xviii. I. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Oesterley, *Op. cit.*, 167.

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The religious meal was thus a well-established custom in Judaism. Nor was Jesus Himself a stranger to the practice. The Last Supper was the last supper in the special sense that it was the last of a series of occasions when Jesus gathered His disciples around Him for a common meal. At the Last Supper Jesus instituted no entirely new rite but rather completed and crowned a series of "Eucharists," the essence of which was the giving of thanks in a common meal. For the evidence of the Gospels makes it clear that Jesus must have been in the habit of partaking of such common meals and of blessing the food. Examples would be the Feeding of the Multitude, and the Supper at Emmaus. Indeed the breaking of bread and the blessing of it seem to have been actions peculiarly characteristic of Jesus. The two disciples who supped with Him at Emmaus had not been present with Him in the Upper Room at Jerusalem, yet they "knew Him in the breaking of bread." Evidently then the Last Supper was not the first occasion when He had put peculiar meaning into the action. A further hint of this habit of Jesus appears in John xxi. 1-14. In this connection some words of Professor Sanday may be quoted: "We are reminded that the phrase *κλᾶν* (*κατακλᾶν*) *ἀρτον* is repeatedly used of a solemn act of our Lord independently of the Eucharist (Mark vi. 41, viii. 6, 19; Luke xxiv. 30). We are reminded also of the many instances in which attention is specially called to the "blessing" (*ἐνλογεῖν* or *ἐυχαριστεῖν*) of food by our Lord. They are the same words which are used in connection with the sacramental bread and

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the sacramental cup. There is something in these facts which is not quite fully explained. There are ‘lacunæ’ in our knowledge which we would fain fill up if we could. The institution of the Eucharist appears to have connections both backwards and forwards—backwards with other meals which our Lord ate together with His disciples, forward with those common meals which very early came into existence in the Apostolic Church.”<sup>1</sup> It may well be that the Last Supper was only the last of a series of such thanksgiving and semi-sacramental meals. Having during a constant table-fellowship familiarised His disciples with the spirit of the common meal, Jesus may finally have pledged them, on the night before He died, to His continual remembrance and fellowship and service. The Last Supper was but one, though the most solemn and significant, of a series of semi-religious meals held on Sabbaths, and feast days and “days of preparation,” all of which were but “special forms of the fundamental common meal of a domestic type, where the home-father was priest.”<sup>2</sup>

What then was the immediate occasion which prompted Jesus to bid His disciples prepare a meal in the Upper Room? On the evidence of the Synoptists (Mark xiv. 12: “On the first day of unleavened bread, the day when the paschal lamb was sacrificed.” Matt. xxvi. 17: “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?” Luke xxii. 7: “Then came the day of unleavened

<sup>1</sup> Hastings *D.B.*, iii. 637.

<sup>2</sup> J. V. Bartlett in *Mansfield College Essays*.

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bread when the paschal lamb had to be sacrificed.”) it was long assumed that Jesus’ intention was to keep the Passover. From all four Gospels it is clear that the institution of the Eucharist, or at least the occasion which was regarded later as such an institution, fell either during or after a meal. But there are grave difficulties in supposing that this was the Passover meal.

(a) The evidence of the Fourth Gospel is completely contradictory, and places the Supper on the evening before the Passover, that is, on the evening of the 13th Nisan, the Passover commencing on the 14th Nisan, the lambs being sacrificed on the afternoon of the 14th and being eaten after sunset, i.e. at the beginning of the 15th Nisan. Thus according to John not the Last Supper but the Crucifixion coincides with the sacrifice of the lambs. The relevant passages are John xiii. 1 ff., xiii. 29, xviii. 28, xix. 14, xix. 31, xix. 42, which show beyond all dispute that in John’s view on the evening of the Last Supper the Passover meal proper was still in prospect, and that when Jesus died on the day following the Last Supper that day was still the “Preparation of the Passover,” i.e. Nisan 14th, the day on the evening of which, at 6 p.m., the first day of the Passover Festival would begin with the eating of the Paschal lambs. Though in this matter the Fourth Gospel is completely at variance with the Synoptists there is good reason for preferring the Johannine date. It is not a question of balancing a single Gospel, the Fourth, against three other independent Gospels, for in this particular Mark is

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the original authority on which the other two depend, and in those passages where Luke is not dependent on Mark (e.g. Luke xxii. 15 f.) there are indications that the so-called Synoptic view of the Supper may not be that which is presupposed by every strand of the earliest tradition. There are hints even in the Synoptics that the Passover had *not* begun when Jesus was crucified. Cf. Mark xiv. 1 f. ("After *two* days was the feast of the Passover"), Luke xxii. 15 (interpreted not as a fulfilled but an unfulfilled desire . . . a note of regret and disappointment that He must die before the longed for Passover arrived). Moreover though in Mark xiv. 12, Matt. xxvi. 17, Luke xxii. 8, the Supper is definitely referred to as a Passover meal, it is noteworthy that no features *peculiar* to the Passover are mentioned. There is no reference anywhere to the roasted Paschal flesh, and the word used for bread is always "ἀρτος," never "ἄξιμα," which would suggest the unleavened cake. Even the singing of the "Hallel" at the close is not peculiar to Passover meals alone. In a word, while John's chronology is clear, logical, and wholly self-consistent, the Synoptists are involved and self-contradictory. Jesus, we have seen, is held to have died on Nisan 15th, the first day of the Passover, which in this year was also a Sabbath. Yet when the evening of this same day arrives (i.e. the hour at which the second day of the feast, the day after the Sabbath, the 16th Nisan begins) the date is given by Mark as "the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath"; while Matthew speaks of the following morning (quite

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consistently with Mark) as the “next day, that is on the day after the Preparation” (Mark xv. 42, Matt. xxvii. 62). Consistently with this reckoning, the day of the Resurrection, being the third day from the Crucifixion, is Nisan 17th, that is 6 p.m. on Sunday to 6 p.m. on Monday (Nisan 15th is the Sabbath, i.e. 6 p.m. on Friday to 6 p.m. on Saturday; Nisan 16th, the day of rest in the tomb, is 6 p.m. on Saturday to 6 p.m. on Sunday; Nisan 17th, the day of Resurrection, is 6 p.m. on Sunday to 6 p.m. on Monday). Yet according to Mark xvi. 2 and parallels it is on the first day of the week that the Resurrection takes place. Another self-contradiction should perhaps be admitted in Mark xiv. 12 (“on the first day of unleavened bread, the day when the Paschal lamb was sacrificed”), for Jewish scholars are agreed that “the first day of unleavened bread” always signifies Nisan 15th, while the lambs were sacrificed on the 14th. Indeed the difficulty of the Synoptic chronology is insuperable and strongly suggests that in John alone has the true chronology been preserved.

(b) Further if, as the Synoptists indicate, the meal from which Jesus went out to His betrayal was indeed the Passover, it follows that the whole drama of arrest, trial and crucifixion took place on the most sacred day of the feast. But such actions as the carrying of arms (Mark xiv. 47), the buying of spices (Mark xvi. 1), the arrival of Simon out of the country (Mark xv. 21), not to speak of the trial and the crucifixion itself (cf. Mark xiv. 2: “Not on the Feast Day lest there be an uproar among the people”)

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are almost inconceivable during a day doubly sacred, when feast and Sabbath coincided, and all secular work would be strictly forbidden by Jewish law. The adoption of the Johannine chronology rids us of such difficulties, for according to John all these events took place either before or on the day of Preparation, that is before the Sabbath and the official feast had begun.

(c) More immediately relevant to our inquiry is the fact that the procedure of the company at the Last Supper, so far as we can reconstruct it from the Gospel accounts, does not agree with the ritual details of the Passover meal. As already noted there is no reference to the flesh of the lamb, the essential element in the Paschal meal. Again, the Passover ritual enjoined the drinking, at certain specified intervals during the meal, of *four* cups of wine, each signifying joy for one of the four special benefits bestowed on Israel by their delivery from Egypt, viz., Liberty, Release, Redemption, Election (see Exodus vi. 6, 7). For this ritual it was necessary for each person to drink from his own cup. Now the Synoptists—apart from Luke who, as we shall see, appears to emphasise the Paschal character of the meal—mention the drinking of but one cup at the Last Supper, and the impression left is that all drank from one common cup. And at what point this cup was partaken of is left doubtful. In Matthew and Mark it comes after the bread, in Luke before it, while Paul's evidence is inconsistent; contrast I Cor. x. 16, 21 (where the cup is mentioned first) with I Cor. xi. 23 ff. (where the bread precedes).

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Moreover, it is important to note that, while in the Jewish ritual the Passover meal proper comes *after* the blessing and dispensing of the cup and bread, the Gospel accounts clearly indicate that the meal *preceded* the more solemn and symbolic words and actions.

Attempts have of course been made to evade the difficulties involved in the Synoptic conception of the Last Supper as a Passover meal. Dalman, e.g. in his book "*Jesus-Jeschua*" argues strongly in favour of the Synoptic accounts, and dismisses the Fourth Gospel account as an unhistorical representation prompted by a polemic desire to divorce Jesus from Jewish observance and to emphasise the symbolism of the Cross. Klausner again, in his recently-translated Life of Jesus, argues afresh for the hypothesis that the Last Supper was a true Passover meal, but was held a day early, i.e. on the evening when the 14th Nisan commenced, as is indicated by the Fourth Gospel. His argument may be briefly summarised. According to a ruling of the Pharisees in Hillel's time the Passover was regarded as a *public* sacrifice. It was therefore held to be important enough to abrogate the Sabbath rules, and even though the 15th Nisan fell on a Sabbath (as was the case in this year) the Passover lambs might still be sacrificed on the eve of the Sabbath (14th Nisan, the regular date) at the moment "between the two days," i.e. though the Sabbath was on the point of beginning. This is usually accepted as the procedure followed in the year of the Passion. But, argues Klausner, according to an earlier ruling, which held good among the

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priestly party almost to the close of the period of the Second Temple, the Passover was regarded as a *private* sacrifice, and as such did not abrogate the Sabbath rules. If therefore the 14th Nisan fell on the Eve of the Sabbath, the sacrifice of the lambs took place a day earlier and the Passover meal would also be antedated by one day. This, Klausner holds, was the procedure followed by Jesus: the lamb was sacrificed on the 13th Nisan, and on the night between the 13th and 14th, a day earlier than usual, was held the true “Seder” or Passover meal. In order to buttress his belief that Jesus, as a Galilean, was likely to follow the stricter ruling, Klausner quotes Pesahim iv. 5: “In Judæa they worked on Passover eve till mid-day: but in Galilee they did not work at all on the eve.” But the preparation of the Passover meal could hardly be reckoned as such “work,” and the quotation rather tells against Klausner’s position; for it hints that the Galileans emphasised the sanctity of Passover and would therefore be the more likely to hold by the ruling whereby “Passover abrogates the Sabbath rules.” On the whole it is extremely improbable that the holding of the Passover meal a day early would be permitted except under conditions practically impossible to Jesus: it would be necessary to adduce some special reason, such as the going on a journey, and to obtain the consent of the priests. We therefore conclude that the Last Supper was not the formal Passover meal.

But what then was the occasion of this meal in the Upper Room? The most attractive theory is

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that suggested in outline by several earlier scholars and worked out more adequately by Dr. W. O. E. Oesterley in his studies on *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*,<sup>1</sup> according to which Jesus gathered His disciples around Him to hold the *Kiddûsh* or Sanctification for the Passover. We have already alluded to the custom whereby “*Chabûrôth*” or circles of friends gathered each week on Friday afternoon for a religious meal in preparation for the Sabbath. Originally this meal took place in private houses, but in early post-Christian times was transferred to the Synagogue, the meal itself being gradually given up and only the sanctification ceremony retained. But in the time of Jesus it was still a household ceremony, already following no doubt much the same ritual as afterwards appears in the synagogue service to which the name of *Kiddûsh* was given. Though in the earliest references to the “sanctification” ceremony only the benediction over the cup is spoken of, while there is no mention of its dispensing nor any reference at all to the bread, the omission of familiar details is easily understandable, and in the ritual of the Synagogue we find both cup and bread spoken of, as well as the blessing pronounced over each. It is worthy of note that, as at the Last Supper but in contrast to the Passover meal, the meal came first and was followed by the sanctification ceremony.<sup>2</sup> The latter consisted of, firstly, words commemorating the institution of the Sabbath at the Creation ; secondly

<sup>1</sup> See also Lietzmann, *Messe und Herrenmahl* and Völker, *Mysterium und Agapé*.

<sup>2</sup> See references in Oesterley, *op. cit.*, p. 170 f.

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the blessing over the cup in the words “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King Eternal, who createst the fruit of the vine,” and the partaking of the cup by all; then the memorial of freedom from the Egyptian bondage; and finally the blessing over the bread in the words “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King Eternal, who bringest forth bread from the earth,” and the distribution of the bread to all present.

Now such a sanctification ceremony was commonly held not only in preparation for the Sabbath but also on the eve of the great festivals, each festival having its own special *Kiddûsh*, and the ritual, except for a reference to the particular feast, being much the same as for the weekly Sabbath. Indeed it seems that “the importance of the Sabbath and of its teaching was not lost sight of even when the first day of the festival coincided with it.”<sup>1</sup> It is suggested that at such a meal the Last Supper took place. Jesus and His *Chabûrah*, or circle of friends,<sup>2</sup> were doubtless in the habit of holding, when circumstances permitted, such weekly religious meals. On this occasion, instead of meeting on the Friday for the usual Sanctification of the Sabbath (for on this particular Friday there fell the Passover meal), they would meet on the Thursday in preparation for the coming Passover season. First the usual social meal would take place, and then as dusk began to fall the President would begin the Sanctification ceremony,

<sup>1</sup> Oesterley, *op. cit.*, 171, cf. 79-81.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John xv. 14: “Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you.”

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which in this case would be the “*Passover-Kiddush*,” combining the commemoration of the Sabbath with a special reference to the redemption from Egypt. Jesus would first take the cup and afterwards the bread, and as He pronounced over them the well-known blessing, He would give to each a new meaning. And therein the institution of the Eucharist took place.

The identification of the Last Supper with such a *Passover-Kiddush* goes far to solve the difficulties with which we have been confronted. The clear and consistent chronology of the Fourth Gospel may be adopted and the Supper assigned to the evening between the 13th and 14th Nisan. The theory fits in well with the idea, already favoured, that the Supper was the last of a series of similar meals. We now understand why, in contrast to the Passover ritual, the actual meal takes place first, while only one cup is spoken of, which is partaken of by all—this being the custom of *Kiddush*. The order in which the elements were distributed, left uncertain by our records, will be brought into line with what appears to have been the custom of the Primitive Church, where the cup was received first. It also becomes more easy to understand why, like the *Kiddush*, the Lord’s Supper afterwards became a weekly commemoration, rather than an annual ceremony like the Passover: indeed, on the supposition that the Supper was a *Kiddush*, the injunction to repeat the Sacrament—“this do in remembrance of me”—becomes much more likely to be historical. Jesus is but commanding the continuation of a habit in which He had

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already trained His disciples, though the familiar gatherings are now to take on a richer and deeper meaning.

In support of his identification of the Last Supper with the Passover-*Kiddush*, Oesterley cites some exceedingly interesting parallels between the text of *Kiddush* and Jesus' Farewell Discourse as presented in John xiv to xvii. The conversation at such meals would inevitably turn on religious themes, and if the discourses in the Fourth Gospel are in any way historical we should expect them to reflect the ideas of *Kiddush* which, if our theory be correct, would form the background of the company's thoughts. A fuller discussion must be postponed until the chapter on Johannine doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

It remains to explain why, if the Last Supper was not a true Passover meal, the Synoptists undoubtedly regarded it as such. The use of the ritual of the Passover-*Kiddush* is surely sufficient explanation. The form of sanctification contains the following words : "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King Eternal, who hast chosen us from all peoples, and exalted us above all tongues, and sanctified us by Thy commandments. And Thou hast given us in love, O Lord our God, appointed times for gladness, festivals and seasons for joy ; this day of the Feast of unleavened bread, the season of our Freedom." Such words create a Passover atmosphere ; the Last Supper took place on the eve of the day of Preparation in order to usher in the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Oesterley, *op. cit.* 184ff.

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Passover season. The Christian Church within a very short time regarded the Lord's Supper as abrogating the Passover feast. How natural then that a confusion should arise whereby the connection of the Last Supper with the Passover rather than with the *Kiddûsh* was emphasised, with the result that it was finally regarded as an actual Passover meal. To this misunderstanding the confusion in the Synoptic chronology is due. Luke, as we shall see, seems deliberately to emphasise the Paschal character of the Supper. If Mark also regards it as a Passover, this is almost certainly because by 70 A.D. the idea had already become established that the Eucharist was the Christian substitute for the Passover. The origin of such a belief might well be looked for in such expressions as Paul's "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (I Cor. v. 7), where, however, a correct exegesis finds no reference whatever to the Eucharist, but only to the sacrifice at Calvary which, on our reckoning, took place on the same day as the killing of the Passover lambs. There is in fact no evidence that Paul himself regarded the Last Supper as a Passover meal. It is the "new covenant" rather than any link with the old covenant which interests him ; and when he looks for an Old Testament type of the Eucharist he finds it not in the Passover, but in the "spiritual meat" provided in the manna : "I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, how that our fathers were all under a cloud, and all passed through the sea ; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea ; and did all eat the same spiritual meat ; and

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did all drink the same spiritual drink : for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them : and the rock was Christ " (I Cor. x. 1-4). Every converging line of evidence goes to prove that the Last Supper of our Lord was not the regular Passover meal.

## CHAPTER III

### The New Testament Accounts of the Last Supper

WE turn now to a more detailed study of the records in an endeavour to reconstruct the scene at the Last Supper, and to recover, so far as possible, the original words and actions of our Lord. Here three preliminary remarks may be in place.

Firstly, let it be remembered that the evidence is fragmentary and in part contradictory. No two of the four reports agree entirely and harmonising is difficult, for there can be no question here of Jesus having spoken on different occasions words which are variously reported in our records as having been spoken on one and the same occasion. What was said at the Supper was said once for all, and if Jesus said what Mark affirms that He said, then neither Luke's account nor Paul's can be precisely accurate. The divergence is somewhat disconcerting, and is probably due to a certain historical carelessness on the part of the writers, born of the idea that they are describing not so much the Last Supper of Jesus as the first Eucharist of the Church, the general procedure at which they would assume to be already familiar to their readers. It also suggests that at the time of writing no rigidly fixed order of ritual had yet been reached.

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Secondly, the contrast between the accounts of the Last Supper and the picture given to us in Acts of the "Breaking of Bread" in the primitive Church is patent; and one of our chief considerations will be to decide how far our knowledge of the ritual of the primitive "Lord's Supper" may be used in our reconstruction of the "Last Supper." It may be argued on the one hand that in the earliest Christian gatherings the common meal was not consciously regarded as a repetition of the Last Supper, and that the forms and teaching inherent in our Lord's Institution were only later recovered and re-established in the Church of Paul. Thus, e.g., the order of the distribution of the elements in the primitive Church, the emphasis on the symbolism of the Church's unity rather than on the symbolism of the Christian's communion with his Lord, the omission of all reference to a "covenant" cup will, it is argued, be no guide to the ritual used by Jesus and the teaching implied by Him in His own Last Supper. On the other hand, and with this point of view we confess sympathy, it may well be argued that the development is more likely to have been from the simpler to the more profound, and that, though the somewhat bare rite of the primitive Church may not have carried forward the full content of Jesus' Institution, yet there may be certain details in our accounts of that Institution which have been read back into it under the influence of more fully developed Eucharistic doctrine and a fuller comprehension of the significance of Jesus' death.

From this follows our third observation: we

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must always start from facts and be careful to distinguish, so far as possible, our writers' facts from their interpretation of the facts, and to estimate how far their own conceptions may have coloured their record of the facts. Thus we may go to Mark for our bedrock facts, yet always with the caution that the background of Mark's conception is a tradition of the facts interpreted in the light of the practice of the Pauline Churches. For example, can we accept as authentic Mark's "shed on behalf of many," and Matthew's "for the remission of sins," or are the phrases due to the writers' own Pauline preconceptions? When Luke adds the words "this do in remembrance of me" is he reflecting a true tradition, or is he merely dependent upon Paul? And had Paul in his turn any authority for putting the words on Jesus' lips, or is he merely deducing from the practice of the Church as he found it that such an injunction to repeat must have been given? And are the other features in which Paul's account differs from Mark's but reflections of Paul's own doctrinal outlook? In other words, are there indications of alterations and additions in Paul's account which fit in with his special theology?

There are four accounts of the Institution. These are to be found in Mark xiv. 22-26, Matt. xxvi. 26-30, Luke xxii. 15-20, 1 Cor. xi. 23-26. But the four accounts reflect but two main traditions represented by (a) Mark and Matthew on the one hand, and (b) Paul and Luke on the other hand. Between the two the most important divergence is

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that according to the Paul-Luke tradition alone does Jesus enjoin the repetition of the rite. It is difficult to decide which tradition is intrinsically the more likely to be authentic: for while Mark-Matthew may claim to represent the tradition of the primitive apostolic circle, and is in itself simpler and therefore less chargeable with dogmatic bias, Paul-Luke on the other hand may commend itself as the earliest written account corroborated later by a historian of Luke's proved accuracy and insight.

In group (a) Mark is obviously the primary authority, Matthew adding but a few extra touches. In group (b) Luke and Paul are closely dependent, Paul's account including certain details omitted by Luke. The probability is that Luke is not solely dependent on Paul but is inspired also by a source common to himself and Paul. It would be to this common source that Paul refers in his words, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you"—words which refer to a concrete tradition rather than to a mystical vision.<sup>1</sup> If this common source be termed PL, then Luke's account, allowing also for a certain direct dependence, oral and written, on Paul, would be a combination of Mark and PL.

The text of Luke has been transmitted in a longer and a shorter form. The shorter or Western Text represented primarily by the Codex "D" omits verses 19b-20. There is thus only one mention of the cup and the order of distribution is cup followed by bread (cf. 1 Cor. x. 16 and Didache ix). The

<sup>1</sup> On this, see p. 70.

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longer or Alexandrian Text supplements the words said over the bread by adding, apparently from 1 Cor. xi. 24 ("This is my body) which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me." There then follows a second mention of a cup with the appropriate words said over it as in Paul's account. Westcott and Hort excised verses 19b-20 from their text as a "Western non-interpolation," and following them many prominent scholars, e.g. Nestle, Johannes Weiss, Loisy, regard the shorter Western Text as authentic and complete in itself, containing as it does reference to both cup and bread with accompanying words of Jesus ; such scholars think that it embodies the earliest of all traditions about the Supper ; the additional words found in the Alexandrian Text are regarded as having been copied almost verbally from Paul by some harmonising scribe. On the other hand, and with this view we agree, other scholars<sup>1</sup> find the strongest reasons for accepting the longer Alexandrian version as the original text of Luke. The excision of 19b leaves 19a ("and He took bread, and gave thanks and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body") as a mere isolated fragment—so much so that, e.g. Wellhausen and Blass excise also 19a and leave Luke's account without any reference whatever to the bread. Verse 19b at least is surely more likely to have been borrowed by Luke himself from Paul than to have been interpolated by a later scribe. And the same may be said of verse 20 containing the second reference to the cup. It may be that Luke

<sup>1</sup> e.g., Goguel : *L'Eucharistie*, pp. 112-116.

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has been prompted to mention two cups by his desire to bring the procedure at the Supper more into line with the Passover ritual. The abbreviation found in the Western Text is most likely due to perplexity created in the mind of later scribes by the mention of two cups in Luke's account. Indeed in the later form of the Western Text we find further variations also designed to bring the Lukan more into line with the other accounts. Sometimes verse 19 is transposed to precede verses 17-18 in order to make the sequence of bread and cup correspond to the other narratives. Sometimes the longer text is itself rearranged thus: 15-16, 19, 20a, 17, 20b, 18—with the result that, though every clause is retained, there now appears to be mention of but one cup. The very fact that several different variants occur, each apparently prompted by the desire to reduce the two cups to one, seems in itself to prove that in the original Lukan text there was mention of two cups. We therefore consider the longer Alexandrian Text to be authentic, though by no means claiming that it embodies the earliest extant tradition concerning the Supper. The Western Text may reflect the truer tradition even though Luke under Pauline influence may have already departed from it. But the importance of accepting the Alexandrian text lies in the fact that we are no longer precluded at any rate *a priori* from considering the possibility whether Luke may not be an independent witness to Jesus' reference to the covenant-efficacy of His death and to His injunction to repeat the Supper.

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We now analyse the data afforded by the four accounts, taking as our standard the Markan narrative : “ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye : this is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them : and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives.” Matthew’s variations are of no great consequence and seem due to a desire to add elegance and balance to Mark’s phrasing. In the comment upon the bread, in place of Mark’s abrupt “ Take ye ! ” Matthew has “ Take, eat ! ” Instead of Mark’s “ they all drank of it ” Matthew writes “ Drink ye all of it ! ”—transforming into a command by Jesus what Mark mentions as a detail, and thereby establishing parallelism with “ Take, eat ! ” To the words said over the cup Matthew adds the clause “ unto remission of sins,” an explanatory and doctrinal addition which is more likely to have been inserted by Matthew than omitted by Mark from the original tradition.

Luke differs from Mark-Matthew by attaching the eschatological saying, “ I will not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come,” to a cup dispensed *before* the bread, the eschatological significance of this first cup being further emphasised by prefacing the dispensing

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with a saying of Jesus peculiar to Luke "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer : for I say unto you, I will no more eat it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." After the distribution of bread there follows, in the longer text, the mention of a second cup following closely Paul's language. As already noted, Luke seems to wish to stress the Paschal character of the Supper. Mark's opening words, "as they were eating," which suggest that the ceremony took place during the course or towards the end of the meal, are omitted by Luke, who prefaces his account with the words, "when the hour was come, he sat down." The impression is then given that Jesus immediately received the first cup, which would correspond to that which opened the Passover ritual. There follows an interval during which the bread is distributed ; then comes the giving and receiving of the second cup, which Luke expressly says took place "after supper," as in the Jewish ritual. Again, in Luke alone it is Jesus who Himself takes the initiative in sending the disciples to prepare for the eating of the Passover. Finally Luke, following Paul, adds to the Mark-Matthew account the injunction to repeat the Supper as a memorial rite : "this do in remembrance of me." Luke's three lines of emphasis are thus (a) Eschatological, (b) Paschal, (c) Institutional.

Paul, as compared with Luke, shows several variants. Instead of Luke's "given for you," we have merely "for you" ( $\tauὸν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν$ ) of which Luke's phrase is an expansion. Paul does not

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expressly mention that Jesus *gave* the bread to the disciples, but this omission can have no significance. After the mention of the blood Paul makes no reference, as do all three Evangelists, to the "shedding" of the blood "for many" or "for you." This omission is of some importance, as the idea would conform so well with Paul's thought, and suggests perhaps that the tradition PL, from which both Paul and Luke drew, had not these words, which may have been added to Luke under the influence of Mark. Both the eschatological declarations in Luke are lacking in Paul, who however gives a hint of a similar thought in the words "till he come." This indicates that Paul too was conscious of the eschatological significance of the Eucharist, and also that an eschatological declaration was present in the source upon which Paul drew. Finally the institutional emphasis is particularly strong in Paul, who records that the repetition of the rite was expressly enjoined by Jesus not once only (after the bread, as in Luke) but likewise also after the dispensing of the cup.

We may now sum up the evidence before us. Out of the combined accounts there appear the following four main features :

(1) The first or, as we shall call it, the "eschatological cup" which is peculiar to Luke, the dispensing of which takes place between two eschatological declarations, the first of which is peculiar to Luke, while the second occurs also in Mark and Matthew but is attached by them to the cup after the bread.

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(2) The distribution of the Bread, with appropriate comment by Jesus, which is recorded in all four accounts.

(3) The dispensing of the "covenant-cup" and Jesus' commentary thereon—recorded by Mark, Matthew, Paul and the longer text of Luke.

(4) Jesus' injunction to repeat the rite, i.e. the institution of a definite ordinance by Jesus, which is vouched for by Paul and Luke.

Before we finally endeavour to reconstruct the scene two preliminary questions demand a brief answer :

(a) The first is of no great importance to the critical historian, but of considerable importance for Eucharistic doctrine. Did Jesus Himself partake of the elements of bread and wine ? None of the narratives gives us any evidence, but if the Last Supper was such a meal as we suppose the answer would seem to be "yes." Jesus would pronounce the blessing on bread and wine in His character of head of the circle of family friends, and would naturally taste of them Himself before distributing to the company. Moreover the words, "I will *no more* drink of the fruit of the vine," suggest that now for the last time He Himself *did* partake of it.

(b) Secondly, what are we to suppose to have been the relation both in time and in significance between the various actions and words which together constitute the rite—the distribution of the elements by Jesus, the partaking of them by the disciples, the commentary on them by Jesus ? As we shall see when we come to consider the thought of Jesus

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in the Sacrament, symbolical meaning must be allowed to the giving by Jesus as well as to the receiving by the disciples. As to the relation of the actions in time, the use by Mark of verbs in the perfect indicative would suggest that the distribution was complete before Jesus made the comment, while Matthew and Luke, by using the participle "saying," make it appear that the distribution and the comment took place simultaneously. But such grammatical hints are slight evidence on which to build. Certainly Jesus' words are much more likely to have been spoken during the distribution than after it. Just as He would bless the bread during the action of breaking it, so while He was distributing it would He explain the meaning which He attached to it. Breaking the bread Jesus would pronounce over it the formal blessing of the *Kiddush* ritual, and then in the act of distribution would add the words which transformed the *Kiddush* into a new sacrament : "this is my body."

The four chief constitutive elements in the combined narratives must now be analysed in detail :

(1) And first the eschatological declarations and the eschatological cup. The first saying (Luke xxii. 15-16), which is peculiar to Luke, should almost certainly be interpreted of not a fulfilled but an unfulfilled desire to partake of the approaching Passover, though Luke himself, regarding the Supper as a Passover meal, may have understood the words as a declaration that the present meal is the last earthly Passover and a prefiguration of the Messianic banquet to come. Whatever be thought of this

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first saying peculiar to Luke, the second eschatological declaration may be accepted as an authentic saying of Jesus. It occurs in all three Synoptic accounts, and Paul, though he omits it, seems to refer to it in the words "till I come" which he places on Jesus' lips. Moreover, as we shall see in our next chapter, it corresponds to something quite fundamental in the thought of Jesus.

But at what stage in the Supper was this declaration made? "I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God." Mark and Matthew attach the words to the "covenant cup" which is dispensed after the bread. Luke attaches them to the cup first mentioned by him, the "eschatological cup" dispensed before the bread. Now it is our conviction that Luke here reflects a true tradition. The eschatological saying is hardly likely to have been attached originally to a "covenant cup," for the symbolism of the latter connects itself with quite a different order of ideas. In Mark's account there seems to be no organic relation between verse 24 and verse 25. In verse 24 the cup of wine is the symbol of the "blood of the covenant which is shed for many." In verse 25 it becomes the pledge that the impending separation is to be transcended in a victorious reunion in the Kingdom. In Luke, on the contrary, the symbolism of the cup to which the saying is attached is wholly and consistently eschatological. Indeed, in the shorter text of Luke at any rate, the dominating thought of Jesus is eschatological. There is a fine balance about Luke

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xxii. 15-18. The first eschatological saying in verse 16 is no mere redundant variation of the second in verse 18, though e.g. Goguel pronounces them "two variants of one and the same declaration," and adds that Jesus "could not have pronounced these two phrases the one after the other."<sup>1</sup> Verse 16 balances verse 15 just as verse 18 balances verse 17. First the expression of Jesus' yearning once more to partake of the Feast followed by the warning that not until the Kingdom comes will that desire be fulfilled; then the dispensing of the farewell cup followed in turn by words interpreting the cup as a pledge of the coming of the Kingdom. And only at this point does the more purely sacramental aspect of the Supper appear in the words of verse 19a, "and he took bread and gave thanks and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body." In Luke the significance of the cup is wholly eschatological, that of the bread alone is sacramental. And herein it may be that the Western Text of Luke reflects the earliest authentic tradition, even though we admit that the longer Text is from the hand of Luke himself. Certainly the fact that the eschatological saying is undoubtedly authentic, while it cannot logically be attached to the symbolism of the covenant cup, is strong evidence that a sound tradition lies behind Luke's mention of a purely eschatological cup distributed probably before the bread.

(2) The distribution of the bread is the one element in the narrative which is present in all the

<sup>1</sup> *L'Eucharistie*, p. 81.

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accounts, as also is the comment, "this is my body," which is the only saying identically the same in all four writers, and is undoubtedly authentic. Loisy indeed would reject even this comment as being a parallel to the comment on the covenant cup and equally impossible upon the lips of Jesus, who, he considers, could not before the event have thus used symbolism to stress the significance of His death. Loisy thinks that Jesus' actual comment over the bread must have been parallel to the comment over the eschatological cup—something along the lines of Luke's first eschatological saying (Luke xxii. 16), "I will not any more eat it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." But, as we shall see, there is some reason to suppose that the symbolism attached by Jesus to bread and cup respectively was *not* in fact parallel. Loisy's objection is simply due to his *a priori* dismissal of the idea that Jesus at the Supper can have had in view the inevitability and divine purpose of His death. That Jesus used the broken bread to symbolise His "body" seems unquestionable. But as for the explanatory additions attached to the bare words "this is my body," whereby it is sought to interpret the "efficacy" of the "body"—the exact form which these took on Jesus' lips is quite uncertain and varies according to the preconceptions of each narrator.

(3) The third element in the combined narratives is the giving and receiving of a cup to which is attached the idea of a "covenant," and here the crux of the problem is reached. Are we to suppose that two cups were in fact dispensed? Or was there only

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one cup, the first (or eschatological) cup being due to Luke's desire to make the Supper appear a Paschal meal? Or finally has the original Lukan eschatological cup been displaced by Mark to follow the distribution of the bread and given an entirely new significance in the light of the covenant idea of St. Paul? We have already seen reason to believe the eschatological cup authentic. But it must be admitted that the conception of a "covenant cup" presents in the circumstances of the Last Supper certain difficulties:

(a) The expression of the covenant idea under the symbolism of a cup the contents of which, symbolising the blood whereby the covenant is ratified, are given to be drunk—this in the present context has been felt to be improbable. That Jesus should have spoken of His approaching death as the means whereby a "covenant" with God would be sealed will occasion surprise only to those who *a priori* reject the idea that for Jesus Himself His own death had any significance. Even the expression "*new covenant*" is quite possible on Jesus' lips, though it is commonly argued that Mark's version of the words—"this is my blood of the covenant"—is probably the more primitive, and Paul, who writes "this cup is the *new covenant* in my blood," may have altered the words in order to bring them into line with his more explicit theology according to which Christianity is a *new covenant* sealed by Christ's death as opposed to the old covenant of the Law (2 Cor. iii. 6 ff.). But is it strictly true that Christ's blood regarded as covenant blood is a

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Pauline conception? And surely Jesus Himself may have shared with Jeremiah the idea of a "new covenant" (Jer. xxxi. 31) which implies not so much the abolishing of the old covenant—a thought, no doubt, more characteristic of Paul than of Jesus—but rather of its renewal and "fulfilment" (Matt. v. 17). If Jesus' words hark back to the great passage in Jeremiah, we may find there, too, the thought that the covenant is one of forgiveness (Jer. xxxi. 34)—"for the remission of sins." For these reasons we do not find the covenant idea difficult in itself. But there is real difficulty in the symbolism under which it is expressed. According to Jewish ritual such a covenant would be sealed not by the drinking of the blood of the covenant sacrifice but by the sprinkling of it upon the parties to the covenant. Thus at the ratification of the Sinaitic covenant (Ex. xxiv. 8) Moses sprinkles the people with the blood of the victim saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant." With this in mind Oscar Holtzmann has suggested that the words in Luke xxii. 20, "which is poured out for you," should be taken as referring not to the blood but to the cup, the supposition being that just as Jesus broke the bread so He poured a libation of the wine. But this was not a Jewish custom. On the other hand it is equally true that the symbolism whereby the worshipper partakes of the flesh or blood of the sacrificial victim is also not Jewish but pagan. Whatever be true of the *origin* of Jewish sacrifice, the above statement holds good of Jesus' time. If the Passover ritual be instanced as an exception, it should be noted

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that so far as *blood* has a place in the symbolism it is not in the meal but in the sprinkling of the lintel ; no doubt the *flesh* of the lamb was eaten, but it is not the bread-flesh symbolism which at the moment we are calling in question. The only other analogy quoted is the peace-offering, the characteristic of which class of sacrifices was that the substance of the sacrifice was shared by the worshippers in a sacrificial meal. But, whatever be said of the bread-flesh symbolism, this somewhat distant parallel hardly gives ground for supposing that Jesus would be likely to invite His friends to ratify the covenant by the drinking of His blood. There is indeed some force in Klausner's verdict : "It is quite impossible to admit that Jesus would have said to His disciples that they should . . . drink of His blood . . . The drinking of blood, even if it was meant symbolically, could only have aroused horror in the minds of such simple Galilean Jews."<sup>1</sup> Even Paul seems to shrink from the somewhat crude realism of the words as reported by Mark, and possibly for this reason writes not "this is My blood of the covenant," but "this cup is the new covenant in My blood." As Loisy has written<sup>2</sup>, "to drink blood was for the Jew the summit of abomination, and the formula, even understood in the mystic sense, terrified the Apostle, who had it in his mind and turned it round, so as not himself to be startled (*effarouché*)."

(b) Again, if the distribution of the bread and of the wine be regarded as two collateral symbolic acts

<sup>1</sup> Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911, p. 54.

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expressing two aspects of the *same* truth—i.e. the giving of Jesus' body to death for the sealing of a covenant of redemption—we would expect the substances symbolised by bread and wine to be not *body* and blood, but rather *flesh* and blood; for “flesh” and blood are co-ordinate as the two constituents of man's material nature, whereas “body” is a general term which includes both. It is significant that in the Fourth Gospel (written at a time when the symbolism of the cup had already been brought into line with that of the bread) this substitution has actually taken place. “He that eateth My flesh,” says Jesus, “and drinketh My blood hath eternal life” (John vi. 54).<sup>1</sup> If in the words of Jesus “body” is, as there is every reason to suppose, authentic, then there is at least a suggestion that the “blood”-symbolism, as attached to a cup considered as a parallel to the bread, may not belong to the same original tradition. The inference is that the wine may have been used in a symbolic act which was *not* originally parallel to the distribution of the bread, i.e. in connection with the eschatological cup which symbolised not the sacrificial efficacy of Jesus' death, but rather its significance as the stepping stone between His earthly ministry and His coming Reign in the Kingdom.

(c) Finally, it is significant that most of the variations in our four accounts of Jesus' words centre on the covenant cup, concerning which tradition

<sup>1</sup> For the idea of “flesh” as but one constituent of the “body” considered as a whole cf. the addition to Eph. v. 30, known already to Irenæus (v. ii. 2) “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.”

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was evidently not nearly so firm as concerning the distribution of the bread. Indeed the fact that Paul regularly speaks of "the cup" and not of "the wine" has been urged as evidence that the contents of the cup varied. Harnack, e.g., (quoting Romans xiv. 21, which however hardly seems apposite) thinks that water may have been used more frequently than wine. This, if proved, would suggest that no great stress was laid on the blood-symbolism ; and such variations of practice would be more easy to understand if the covenant cup had no place in the most primitive ritual of the Supper.

To sum up, there is a good deal of evidence that the symbolism attaching to the cup at the Last Supper was different from that attaching to the bread, though this distinction was early lost sight of. It appears likely that the eschatological significance of the cup is original, while the sacrificial significance which, let it be emphasised, is truly present in the Supper symbolism, is confined to the bread alone. Luke has preserved the true tradition, though in order to bring his account into line with Paul he adds a second reference to the cup, in which it appears as a covenant cup. A trace of this original tradition is perhaps preserved in the eschatological emphasis put on the cup in the Eucharistic prayers of the *Didache*. There in chapter ix. we read : "And concerning the thanksgiving thus give thanks. First concerning the cup : We give thanks to Thee, our Father, for the holy *Vine of David Thy servant*,"—words which recall such phrases as "the root of Jesse," "the Son of David," which in Jewish and

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Christian Church alike were connected with the coming of the Messianic Kingdom. The "Vine" thus symbolises not the sacrificial blood of Christ but rather, as more mystically in John xv, the idea of Christ as Head or Root of the approaching Kingdom.

(4) We pass finally to the injunction to repeat the rite. The words "this do in remembrance of Me" occur only in the Paul-Luke narrative; neither as attached to the bread nor to the wine do they appear in Mark-Matthew, and they are hardly likely to have been omitted if they belong to the original tradition. There is nothing in Mark's account to suggest that Jesus was "instituting" a rite for repetition, any more than by the feet-washing in the Fourth Gospel. It is not enough to say with Gore, that if Mark's story and Matthew's "do not contain the words, 'this do in remembrance of Me,' they must imply them."<sup>1</sup> No doubt Mark does himself regard the Eucharist as an institution. But our knowledge of the facts of Jesus' life would be in a sorry plight if we could not confidently extract from Mark's Gospel a tradition earlier and more trustworthy than the evangelist's own conceptions. As for Luke's evidence, he is so dependent on Paul that the most that can be said is that the introduction of Jesus' command into his account at least proves that, by the time Luke wrote, the supposed command was generally accepted as binding by the Church.

The fact is that our evidence for the institution of the Eucharist as a permanent rite is entirely

<sup>1</sup> Gore: *Reconstruction of Belief*, p. 675.

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dependent on Paul ; but that evidence comes to us with no little authority, for as Canon Guy Rogers has put it,<sup>1</sup> “ it is still a question of believing what I might call the sworn statement of St. Paul, backed by the custom of the early Church.” When Paul writes (I Cor. xi. 23), “ I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you,” he is almost certainly claiming to have received his information not through a direct revelation or vision, but through indirect channels, through oral or written (e.g. the source PL) records of what the Lord had said. Apart from the fact that it is not God’s way to reveal by way of a vision even to His saints information which may be had through natural channels, the Greek preposition used in the phrase “ from the Lord ” ( $\pi\alpha\rho\acute{e}\lambda\beta\sigma\nu$   $\grave{\alpha}\pi\grave{o}$  (not  $\pi\alpha\rho\grave{a}$ )  $\tau\grave{o}\nu$   $Ku\rho\acute{e}o\nu$ ) is quite correctly used of indirect rather than direct information, to describe the ultimate rather than the immediate source of knowledge. Paul seems to be claiming that he is handing on to his own disciples a tradition received himself from Jesus’ immediate disciples and therefore ultimately “ from the Lord ” himself. Nothing, therefore, could be more misleading than when, e.g., Loisy writes: “ The manner in which Paul introduces the narrative of the Lord’s Supper gives us to understand that this narrative is personal to him, and borrows nothing from the tradition of the Galilean Apostles.”<sup>2</sup> Wider still of the mark are references to “ auto-suggestion ” and statements such as that of the Editors of *The*

<sup>1</sup> *The Modern Churchman*, October, 1926, p. 451.

<sup>2</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911, p. 54.

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*Beginnings of Christianity* that when Paul claims to have received the Christian tradition "from the Lord" he had really "imagined it himself, and that because of the Mysteries celebrated at Corinth." The whole point of the words is that Paul is claiming an authority higher than his own. He has received the story of the Supper, even as he has received the story of the Resurrection (cf. I Cor. xv. 3, where the same word, "I received," *παρέλαβον*, is used) from a tradition handed down from the time of the Lord Himself. And Paul makes this claim almost as if on oath. No one who recalls his horror at being considered a false witness about the Resurrection or his repudiation of those who "handle the word of God deceitfully" (2 Cor. iv. 2) will give anything but the greatest weight to Paul's evidence here.

Yet Paul's evidence for a direct institution is at best inconclusive and it may well be that the words, "this do in remembrance of Me," have been introduced by him with perfect sincerity into the tradition received by him under the conviction that it *must* have been in obedience to an express command that the Supper was celebrated in the Church as he knew it. There is of course no question whatever of challenging Paul's *bona fides*. The suggestion merely is that the words of institution may be not so much exact quotation as part of Paul's explanatory paraphrase, intended to interpret the full sense of the historic Last Supper in its bearing upon the Church's practice, just as certain other features in which Paul's wording differs from Mark's reflect Paul's movement towards a more developed

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sacramental doctrine. Certainly if the words of institution date back to Jesus Himself it is very difficult to explain not only why they have fallen out of the Mark-Matthew tradition, but also why they have failed to influence the form of the early Church's "breaking of bread" more than is implied by our evidence. Concerning the words of institution there must always be some uncertainty, and our decision whether or no they were spoken by Jesus will largely depend on the view we take concerning Jesus' own thought at the Supper. But we need not hesitate to stress the value of a judgment resting on probability, and many of us will agree with Harnack when he says,<sup>1</sup> "The words of I Cor. xi. 23 are too strong for me."

From the analysis of the four New Testament accounts which has just been attempted we conclude that the two constituent elements in the ritual of the Last Supper were, first the giving of a cup with the relative eschatological declaration, and second the distribution of the bread with an appropriate comment—in each case either with or without an injunction to repeat the rite. In other words Jesus blessed and passed round the wine saying that He would not again drink of it till the Kingdom had come, and distributed the bread with the words, "This is My body." But the "eschatological cup" of the earliest tradition seems to have been gradually displaced by the idea of a "covenant cup," when concurrently with an increasing emphasis on the doctrinal significance of Jesus' death the wine came

<sup>1</sup> *History of Dogma*, English Translation, I., 66, note i.

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to be regarded, no less than the bread, as symbolical of that sacrificial death. It may be suggested that this transformation was due in the main to two tendencies : (a) Firstly, to a quite natural inclination to assimilate the symbolism of the wine to that of the bread, and to bring the wine-distribution under the same order of ideas as the bread-distribution, on which, as we have seen, the chief stress always fell. In the Pauline Eucharist the cup has become the exact parallel of the bread : the second ritual act has become assimilated to the first, and both alike show forth the sacrificial death of Christ. Thus was the original eschatological cup transformed into a “ covenant cup ” with the comment added, as a parallel to that on the bread, “ this is My blood.” (b) The second cause of the transformation is linked up with the first and is to be found in the gradual transference of emphasis from the eschatological to the redemptive significance of Christ’s death. That this redemptive meaning was present from the first in the sacrament is not for a moment denied. But modern scholarship has done a real service in recovering the eschatological atmosphere of the Last Supper, which was in danger of being lost. Nor in doing so has it taken anything from the Supper’s impressiveness as a symbolical drama of redemption. In the thought of Jesus, as we shall see, eschatology and redemption are interwoven. Had He not come up to Jerusalem dominated by the idea that the Messianic Kingdom could be hastened only by the pouring forth of His own life in sacrificial obedience and love “ on behalf of the many ? ”

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As to the order of the two ritual acts at the Last Supper, if our reconstruction is correct the order must have been cup, bread. This was the order in the *Kiddush* of the Sabbath and other festivals ; it is the order in Luke, who preserves the primitive tradition of the eschatological cup, though this evidence is to a certain extent discounted by Luke's desire to approximate the ritual to that of the Passover meal, and by the fact that Luke's text is a combination of the primitive tradition with the secondary Pauline tradition ; it is the order in the observance of the primitive Church, if we are to judge by the Eucharistic prayers of the *Didache*, Chapter ix ; and in I Cor. x. 16 even Paul mentions "the cup of blessing which we bless" before "the bread which we break" as the two elements in the "communion," though, as we shall see (p. 145), little stress can be laid on this verse. Indeed the order, cup . . . bread, is the only order of which we have explicit evidence for the first decades after the Crucifixion, and it is reasonable to suppose that this order reflects the original order at the Last Supper. The familiar order, bread . . . cup, though it might seem to rest on a firm tradition, is in fact bound up with the later conception of a "covenant-cup."

Once the significance of the cup-symbolism had become assimilated to that of the bread-symbolism, both alike now typifying the sacrificial offering by Christ of Himself, it would inevitably be felt fitting that the distribution of bread, wherein were set forth in a more general sense and under the more comprehensive term "body" the benefits of the redemptive

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incarnation, should precede the dispensing of the cup, which in a special sense and under the more specialised term “ blood ” symbolised the specific sacrifice of Calvary. But the reverse order—first the cup and then the bread—is primitive. Indeed it may be that, only after Mark’s and Paul’s narrative of the Last Supper began to tell as a model for the Lord’s Supper, did the order, bread . . . cup, come universally to prevail. “ And concerning the thanksgiving ” ( $\tau\eta\varsigma \epsilon\nu\chi\rho\nu\sigma\tau\iota\alpha\varsigma$ ), runs the passage in the *Didache* already alluded to, “ thus give thanks : *first* concerning the cup, ‘ We give thanks to Thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David Thy servant, which thou didst make known to us through Thy servant Jesus. To Thee be glory for ever.’ And concerning that which is broken, ‘ We give thanks to Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou didst make known to us through Thy servant Jesus. To Thee be glory for ever.’ ”

## CHAPTER IV

### The Thought of Jesus at the Last Supper

SUCH is the reconstruction we offer of the words and actions of our Lord at the Last Supper. But what inward interpretation is to be placed upon these outward facts? What was Jesus' thought and purpose when He thus gathered His disciples around Him for the last time and dispensed the cup, saying that He would no more drink of it till the Kingdom had come, and the bread, saying that it was His body?

It need not be said that the answer to this question is of paramount importance. The appeal to the Gospels must be the final testing ground of all Christian doctrine; and Christ's own thoughts at the Last Supper must be normative of the meaning which we read into all subsequent observances of the Sacrament. It is of course perfectly true, as Canon Quick has written, that "to see nothing in Eucharistic theology but a problem of higher criticism and exegesis is to make a very dangerous mistake. It is true that all we need for sound doctrine is to draw out the full implication of our Lord's words and acts. But these implications cannot be drawn out or appreciated if we refuse the help which the subsequent reflection and experience of Christians alone can provide. Narrow pedantry and unimaginative literalism in exegesis have ever been the chief obstacles

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to the understanding of the mind of Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> One willingly grants the appeal to Christian experience ; and yet Zahn’s dictum remains true that “scientific investigation concerns itself less and less with the thoughts of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and more and more with the original facts themselves.”<sup>2</sup> Sound doctrine *does* depend on “drawing out the full implication of our Lord’s words and acts,” and it will not do to assert as is sometimes done that the Supper, as celebrated by Jesus, was something less than subsequent Eucharists, a mere “shadow Eucharist” to be followed only after Christ’s death by the first true Eucharist, which would be the reality foreshadowed by the Last Supper. Thus N. P. Williams can paraphrase the meaning of Jesus in the eschatological declaration : “This is the last of these prophetic actions. . . . The next celebration of this feast will not be, as this is, a provisional and anticipated transaction of the sacramental mystery ; it will be the mystery itself, consummated in the Kingdom of God, that is, in my Church.” And again : “The Apostles at the Last Supper did not feed upon Christ, as we do now, in reality, but only in figure ; their first real communion can only have been made after the body and blood had been glorified.”<sup>3</sup> It is enough to reply that for Paul at least the Eucharist is no such “real” communion with a Christ made magically present by the

<sup>1</sup> O. C. Quick, *The Christian Sacraments*, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> *Brot und Wein im Abendmahl der alter Kirche*, p. 1; quoted by Lambert. *The Sacraments in the New Testament*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Essays Catholic and Critical*, pp. 406, 423.

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"transaction of the sacramental mystery"; it is the memorial which proclaims Christ's death and quickens spiritual fellowship with Him only "till He come." And as such its doctrinal content must be defined by the thought of Jesus Himself at that Supper, which according to Paul himself is the proto-type of every subsequent communion of Christians with each other and with their Lord.

Axiomatic also should be the consideration that Jesus' thought at the Last Supper is likely to be in line with the whole of the rest of His teaching. We have no right to treat the Supper as an isolated act complete in itself which may be legitimately torn out of the context of Jesus' whole ministry and teaching. Indeed, though we may regard the words spoken at the Supper as the crown of our Lord's teaching, H. J. Holtzmann is probably right when he says that to understand the meaning of the Supper it is unnecessary to introduce any other ideas beyond those which are found in the general teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Emphasised certain features of that teaching undoubtedly are. But it is the same teaching.

Finally we must try to enter into the *mood* in which for the last time Jesus had come up to Jerusalem. What were the thoughts to which He gave verbal and symbolic utterance on that last tragic night? Was He preoccupied mainly with the hope of Messianic triumph or with the imminent threat of death? On the one hand all the evidence shows that Jesus had the probability of death clearly in view. We are told little about that last fatal

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journey to the Capital except that again and again Jesus reminded His friends that they must be prepared for the worst. On the other hand it is equally clear that the life-sacrifice which Jesus anticipated was not such as would compromise for ever the success of His mission. At the last, be it soon or late, God would intervene to confound His enemies and assure His triumph. Indeed, if we are to judge by Jesus' anguish at Gethsemane, His struggle to accept the cup which the Father seemed to be offering to Him, death, though it had long been a threatening probability, may not yet have fully entered into His purpose. It is a misunderstanding of Jesus' mind to suppose that He came to Jerusalem with the deliberate intention of *forcing* His enemies to put Him to death, much more so to imagine with Middleton Murry that "Jesus' betrayal and the manner and the agent of it were pre-determined by Himself."<sup>1</sup> "We have rather to think of Jesus as uncertain till the very last. He was aware of the strong forces arrayed against Him, and knew that in all human probability He would encounter death. He felt, too, that the highest service for God involved suffering, and that the Messiah must fulfil His task as the prophets had done before Him. There was a clear presentiment in His mind that He would die at Jerusalem, but He still deemed it possible that He might be mistaken. Perhaps in some wonderful manner that He could not yet foresee God would interpose to bring His cause to victory. He was certain of nothing except that God had laid a

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Jesus*, p. 208.

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duty upon Him which could only be accomplished by His appearance in Jerusalem at the great feast. He therefore went up, prepared for death, but leaving the issue in the hands of God.”<sup>1</sup> But amidst all uncertainty of one thing Jesus was certain, that through Himself, be it by apocalyptic triumph or shameful death, the Kingdom would come.

Now, in view of this, at the Last Supper Jesus’ thought was likely to centre both on His future eschatological triumph and on His impending death, and we shall look for the symbolism both of victory and of sacrifice ; and that is what we find. Why should not Jesus in that last meal, held under the shadow of approaching tragedy, have tried alike to teach His disciples the purpose of His sacrifice, and also to give them the pledge that what might seem to be the ruin of their hopes was in reality the divinely planned means of their fulfilment ? In other words, we must leave room for both the eschatological and the redemptive side of Jesus’ teaching in the Sacrament.

We shall adopt the same line of sequence as in our previous analysis of the four constituent elements in our accounts :

(i) And first we consider the giving of the cup with the accompanying eschatological declaration, “Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.” The centrality of the conception of the “Kingdom” in Jesus’ teaching and the fact that much of His speaking about that

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Scott, *The First Age of Christianity*, p. 75.

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Kingdom was couched in current apocalyptic language must be frankly accepted. The Kingdom for Jesus is essentially conceived as future ; in so far as it is regarded as actually present, it is so only proleptically ; Jesus' eyes are ever fixed upon the consummation in the future. When He says, "the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 21), He is merely putting forward this thought in opposition to the notion, alluded to in the previous clause, that the Kingdom is something which is "here, or there." The meaning is not that the Kingdom is already present, but that it is such that entrance into it is conditioned not locally but morally. The secret of the Kingdom will be discovered not by "observation" of Messiah's appearance at this or that spot, but in the state of the "observer's" heart. Jesus took over the hopes of the Jewish Apocalyptists, but He differed from them in thinking of the Kingdom as a new *moral* order—"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

Jesus then would be accustomed to express His thoughts in the current apocalyptic picture-language. Of particular interest for our purpose is the idea of a Divine Banquet which is found alike in Psalms, Prophets and Apocalyptists. "Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies," says the Psalmist (xxiii. 5). "In this mountain," cries Isaiah, "shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Is. xxv. 6; cf. lv. 1 f., lxv. 13). "Come, eat ye of my bread," we read in Proverbs,

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"and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. ix. 5). In the Apocalypses the picture is specially common: the coming of the Kingdom will be celebrated in a Messianic Banquet at which the elect will eat with the Son of Man (cf. Enoch xxiv. 4, lxiv. 4; Baruch xxix. 5-8). A similar idea appears in Rev. ii. 7, vii. 16-17, xix. 9. And Jesus Himself several times employs this Messianic imagery. The parables present the Kingdom in the guise of a wedding-banquet (Matt. xxii. 1 ff., xxv. 1 ff.). More interesting still is the remark of a fellow guest to Jesus which, according to Luke (xiv. 15), our Lord makes the starting point of His parable: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

Now the eschatological saying which accompanies the dispensing of the cup at the Last Supper is quite obviously related to these passages. In the same context Luke represents Jesus as saying to the disciples: "I appoint unto you a Kingdom, even as My Father appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom" (Luke xxii. 29-30). And in another connection Matthew has preserved for us Jesus' words: "I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom." It may be that certain other incidents during Jesus' ministry were prompted by the same complex of ideas. Most interesting is the "Feeding of the Multitude," the essential features of which are the breaking of bread with a blessing and the distribution of the bread to the people. It is not only modern scholars who have remarked here the

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resemblance to the Last Supper. The Fourth Gospel gives us as a commentary on the multiplication of the loaves Jesus' great Eucharistic discourse ; and that the connection between the two occasions was early appreciated seems proved by the fact that some of the ancient liturgies introduce into the ritual of the Eucharist details drawn from the narrative of the Feeding of the Multitude, e.g. the words from Mark vi. 41, "looking up to heaven"—Jesus blessed and broke the bread. Hence it is suggested that on both occasions Jesus intended to prefigure the Messianic Banquet. Just as at the Lake side he had distributed the loaves to His followers in anticipation of the coming of the Kingdom, so at the Last Supper did He adumbrate the Messianic feast in expectation of His immediate triumph. This suggestion we are disposed tentatively to accept, though we are not prepared to go the length of regarding either distribution as a true "eschatological sacrament." This is of course the position of Schweitzer and the school of "thorough-going eschatology." The sacraments for them are purely eschatological. For Schweitzer the Feeding of the Multitude and the Last Supper are exact parallels, and both have not only a symbolic but a truly sacramental significance in view of the coming Kingdom. In a time of eschatological expectation the supreme question was "how in the present time a man could obtain a guarantee of coming scatheless through the judgment, of being saved and received into the Kingdom."<sup>1</sup> This guarantee of salvation

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 375.

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Jesus provided in His eschatological sacrament. At the Feeding of the Multitude "the significance lies in the giving of thanks and in the fact that they had received from Him consecrated food. Because He is the future Messiah, this meal becomes without their knowledge the Messianic feast. With the morsel of bread which He gives His disciples to distribute to the people He consecrates them as partakers in the coming Messianic feast, and gives them the guarantee that they, who had shared His table in the time of His obscurity, would also share it in the time of His glory. . . . The feeding of the multitude was more than a love-feast, a fellowship meal. It was from the point of view of Jesus a sacrament of salvation."<sup>1</sup> The significance of the Last Supper is exactly the same except that, while the meal at the Lake was "a veiled eschatological sacrament," at the Last Supper "Jesus signified to His disciples the nature of the ceremony and at the same time expressed the thought of the Passion in the two parables ('My body—My blood'). The cultus-meal was the same: a foretaste of the Messianic banquet in the circle of the fellowship of the believers in the Kingdom."<sup>2</sup> Schweitzer thinks that his theory explains "why we find Baptism and the Lord's Supper both in Paul and in the earliest theology as sacramental acts, not as symbolic ceremonies, and find them dominating the whole Christian doctrine."<sup>3</sup> He also claims that "now

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> *Mystery of the Kingdom*, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 378.

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for the first time one is able to understand how the nature of the Last Supper can be independent of the two parables.”

The truth is that the eschatological theory errs just at this point, that it treats the Last Supper *too* independently of the “two parables,” and does not sufficiently explain Jesus’ meaning in them. It accounts for the giving of the cup adequately enough, but hardly for the distribution of the bread with the words “this is My body,” though as we shall see shortly an attempt is made to give even these words a purely eschatological meaning. Moreover there is no evidence to justify us in crediting Jesus with such sacramental conceptions as are implied in the statement that to the crowd at the Lake Jesus “distributes hallowed food, mysteriously consecrating them thereby to be partakers of the heavenly banquet.”<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless Schweitzer has done a real service in emphasising an aspect of the Supper which was in danger of being ignored. The dispensing of the cup and the saying which accompanies it must undoubtedly be related to the order of ideas which we have been discussing. In the giving of the cup and the words said over it, Jesus foreshadows His coming separation from His disciples and a speedy reunion in the triumph of that Messianic Kingdom which had been so often pictured as a heavenly banquet. In this sense, though hardly in the more strictly “sacramental” sense implied by Schweitzer, the Supper was a pledge of Christ’s own “Parousia” and a guarantee of His disciples’ standing in His

<sup>1</sup> *Mystery of the Kingdom*, 262.

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Kingdom. Not only were the inner circle of Jesus' friends to "eat bread in the Kingdom of God" like others in the Messianic age (Luke xiv. 15): they were to have a place near the Messiah's own person, to "eat and drink at His table in His Kingdom" (Luke xxii. 30).

It is doubtful whether by the dispensing of the cup to the circle Jesus adds anything to His meaning save to give to the accompanying words a concrete vividness. We are not told that Jesus poured out the wine, as might be expected were a special meaning intended by the action, as is undoubtedly so by the breaking of the bread which is expressly mentioned. That Jesus *did* pour out the wine may be taken for granted, but the action evidently has no such significance in the eyes of the narrators as has the breaking of the bread. Possibly this is another hint that the symbolism of the two ritual acts did not belong originally to the same order of ideas.

(2) We pass to the distribution of the bread. The gesture is a perfectly natural one and, leaving out of account for the moment the words which accompany it, the essential thought underlying it would seem to be that of fellowship. The common bread broken and passed from hand to hand becomes the pledge of a fraternal covenant between those who partake of it. Whether or no we hold that Jesus was instituting a parallel to the Mosaic covenant sealed with blood, or foreshadowing a Messianic covenant to be ratified in the coming Kingdom, the covenant-idea in this purely general sense must

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certainly have been present. A common meal inevitably becomes before everything else the symbol of fellowship among those who are table-companions. In the distribution of the one loaf following the drinking from the one cup we are witnessing a rite of communion in the sense of "sharing together." That this—a fellowship of intimate intercourse and reciprocal love, rather than any mystico-sacramental idea, is the primary meaning of the distribution by Jesus and reception by the disciples is suggested by the fact that Jesus Himself almost certainly would partake of the elements, thus making Himself one of a company of brothers. A reminder of this primary thought of fraternal fellowship in the Supper is given to us by Paul when after speaking of "the communion of the body of Christ" he adds: "we who are many are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread" (I Cor. x. 17).

But this thought obviously does not exhaust Jesus' intention in the Supper. Is it permissible to read into the symbolic action a more strictly "sacramental" purpose whereby the symbolism expressing the gift and the giving becomes not only mere symbolism but also the actual vehicle by means of which some mystic grace of communion is *ex opere operato* conveyed? It is most improbable that such ideas had any place in Jesus' thought at the original Supper. Many, possibly the majority, of modern critical scholars no doubt believe that "sacramental teaching is central in the primitive Christianity to which the Roman Empire began to be converted."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lake, *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 385.

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But very few, with the exception of certain Anglo-Catholics who on this road are almost indecently eager to go even an extra mile with the otherwise anathematised critic, hold that sacramentalism in this stricter and "higher" sense formed any part of the teaching of Jesus Himself. There are of course an infinite number of nuances between an action which is purely symbolic and one which is sacramental in a strictly instrumental sense. But it may be said with confidence that any "realist" conception of the means by which spiritual grace is conveyed is quite alien to the spirit of Jesus' teaching. Nowhere does He suggest the performance of any ritual act as the condition or medium of salvation. Repentance and faith and the gift of a man's heart to a Father God are enough. To read into His thought at the Supper any "sacramental" intention in this instrumental sense is to introduce an order of ideas entirely unexpressed in His teaching hitherto, and for that reason necessarily unintelligible to those whose instruction was Jesus' first desire. On the other hand a symbolical interpretation of the distribution of the bread accords perfectly with the general form of Jesus' teaching. A symbolic act is one which in itself and by itself has no particular significance or efficacy, but serves, so to speak, as a material envelope for an idea which it expresses in a manner tangible to the senses. A sacramental act has as its purpose not only nor mainly the translation of an idea into material form but the bestowal on those who participate in it of a supernatural "reality"—a real grace—corresponding to that idea.

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Now Jesus' habit of teaching by means of symbol appears in His love of the parable, His aversion from abstract ideas, His fondness for the concrete object-lesson drawn from everyday sights. But to call Jesus a sacramentalist on that account is to confuse sacrament with symbol. It is perfectly true to say that "the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels is a character to whom every object in nature appeals . . . as bringing into relief some particular aspect of the Divine Nature. . . . The world of beauty to Him only has meaning as interpreting the Master-Artist. . . . All earthly objects, animate or inanimate, presented to the vivid imagination of Jesus some worthy and exquisite character of the Father's mind."<sup>1</sup> But that is symbolism pure and simple and does not justify the inference that "the whole universe became for Jesus a great and infinitely varied sacrament." To say that "the essence of all sacraments . . . is that the external objects of nature and life shall be so apprehended that they may become windows through which we may get a glimpse of God, and also through which the Divine light may find its way into our lives," is no doubt to express a beautiful thought; but to call Jesus a "sacramentalist" because He discovered and flung open such windows is possible only by unjustifiably enlarging the idea of "sacrament" to such an extent that the word becomes impossible of use in scientific discussion. The truth is that Jesus revelled in symbolical as contrasted with sacramental teaching. The symbolical idea always dominates, the sacramental

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Douglas White in *The Modern Churchman*, October, 1926.

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being present only in so far as ancient thought did not distinguish as we do between symbol and reality, the sign and the thing signified. In popular thought at any rate the symbol itself possessed something of the reality of the thing symbolised. To the New Testament writers, save possibly to the Fourth Evangelist, who is conscious of the antinomy between "the spirit that quickeneth" and "the flesh" that "profiteth nothing," sacraments presented no problem whatever.

With this in view in what sense are we to understand Jesus' words "this is My body"? The realist explanation can be immediately ruled out on grounds just stated, not to speak of the impossibility of Jesus affirming the substantial identity with His own body of the bread which He held in His own hands and was probably Himself about to partake of. Using the same vivid Oriental symbolism as had already appealed to His hearers in such utterances as "I am the door," "I am the true vine," "I am the light of the world," Jesus declares: "This bread represents My body, and in giving it to you I am prefiguring the gift of Myself." The primary idea emphasised is simply the gift by Jesus of Himself, and not any mystical or sacramental efficacy inherent in the disciples' eating of the proffered bread. If Jesus not only distributes the bread but also bids His friends, "Take, eat," it is only that He may vividly drive home to them their opportunity to receive no less than His own willingness to bestow. Had Jesus pushed the symbolism further and intended them to draw a mysterious meaning out of the act

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of eating and drinking, He would merely have obscured His central thought, and rendered so much the less effective an object lesson the perfection of which is its simplicity.

Attempts have been made to explain the distribution of the bread and the accompanying saying on the same lines as the dispensing of the cup, and to make their significance purely eschatological. The distribution of the bread might no doubt in itself be regarded as an exact parallel to the feeding of the multitude, both alike being intended as a foretaste of the Messianic feast. But how explain Jesus' words "this is My body"? Spitta takes refuge in the far-fetched idea that in the day of the Kingdom the faithful will feed on the flesh of Messiah, whom Rabbinism identified with the Manna. Reference is made to the Rabbinic sayings "to eat the years of the Messiah," "to eat the Messiah"; but the Rabbinic evidence is later than Jesus' day; and in any case such ideas are nothing more than metaphor. The Messiah in the Kingdom, no less than Jesus Himself at the Last Supper, at one and the same time presiding at the banquet and offering His own flesh for food, would be a picture utterly unintelligible to the simple Galilean disciples. A purely eschatological explanation of the bread-distribution is impossible, and even Schweitzer definitely relates it to the thought of Jesus' coming sufferings.

The words "this is My body" are also explained as merely intended to make still more vivid the symbolism of brotherhood which is primary in the

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common meal. Thus, e.g. Jean Réville<sup>1</sup> allows no reference in the words to Jesus' death, which even if present in Jesus' mind would not have been understood by the disciples. He accordingly refers to Paul's conception of a mystic "body" of Christ, the fellowship of believers, the Church; alongside of this he places a simile found in the *Didache* wherein the faithful reassembled in the Kingdom from all over the earth are compared with the grains of wheat once scattered on the hillsides and now reunited in the Eucharistic bread. The presence both in Paul's letters and the *Didache*, which in other respects differ so widely in their Eucharistic doctrine, of this conception of the unity of believers—illustrated by Paul in the unity of the members of Christ's "body" and in the *Didache* by the unity of the grains in the Eucharistic bread—suggests to Réville the existence of a very primitive tradition wherein the bread was regarded as a symbol of union between Christ and Christians and between Christians one with the other. Though not denying that such a thought may have been present in Jesus' mind, it is worth pointing out that Paul also does not find such a conception of Christ's "body" inconsistent with the use of the word in the same immediate context to express a very different idea. In I Cor. x. 17 he writes: "We, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread," thus asserting that the partaking of the Eucharistic bread realises the unity of the Church. But in the previous verse he has written: "The

<sup>1</sup> *Les Origines de l'eucharistie*, pp. 143 ff.

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bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?" where the parallelism with the "communion of the blood of Christ" makes it certain that by "body" Paul means not the mystic "body" which is the Church, but the "body" and the "blood" of Christ Himself which together, under the symbol of bread and wine, represent His sacrificed humanity given to the world.

Besides, the action of Jesus in Himself distributing the bread has a significance of its own which is largely lost if the sole thought is the unity of believers. Indeed the whole meaning of the feast depends on the fact that Jesus personally gives the food. Leaving aside for the moment the question whether in the word "body" and in the gesture of breaking there is any allusion to Jesus' *death*, the primary idea is evidently the gift by Jesus of Himself to His disciples. Again we leave aside for the moment the question whether the gift is also *for* them, "on behalf of" them. As a gift *to* them the bread which is Jesus' body symbolises all that He is and does and dares, His teaching and works and promises, His whole personality to be the spiritual food of their souls. "The gift of Jesus to His own is Himself, that is to say the very essence of His thought, His faith, His heart; He spends Himself, without counting the cost, to kindle in them the flame which devours Himself, to bring to birth and to cherish in each one of them the aspirations, the energies, the certitudes which animate Himself."<sup>1</sup> "This is My body": and in the gesture of breaking and personally distributing

<sup>1</sup> Goguel, *L'Eucharistie*, p. 100.

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the bread Jesus gives concrete vividness to the parabolic words.

We see then that the order of ideas symbolised in the bread distribution is quite different from that which we traced in the giving of the cup. But it does not follow that the two symbolic acts are entirely unrelated save by the accident of juxtaposition. Two symbolic acts performed the one closely upon the other, in the same set of circumstances and therefore expressive of the same mood, or at least of closely related moods, must surely themselves be connected in some organic relationship. And the connection is probably this: the eschatological pronouncement of impending separation and speedy reunion, which is symbolised in the giving of the cup, suggests the reason why, at this particular moment, Jesus should distribute the bread thereby symbolising the gift of Himself to His own. It is just because He is about to be separated from them, yet only for a season, that He institutes this symbol whereby He seeks to explain something of the reason for this separation: and, conversely, the symbolic gift becomes as it were the pledge that the promise symbolised by the cup will be realised. But as the cup probably preceded the bread the first suggested sequence of thought, in itself the most satisfactory, is to be preferred: the thought of coming separation makes the occasion for the symbolic giving of Himself.

We are thus reminded anew of the intimate connection between what we have called the eschatological and the sacrificial aspects of the Supper,

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and that by ignoring the one we shall certainly fail to understand the other. It is in this close relationship between the distribution of the bread and the previous eschatological pronouncement that we find the strongest reason for supposing that in the distribution of the bread Jesus quite definitely had His *death* in view. For Jesus must have envisaged some cause for the crisis of separation which He felt to be impending, and what more natural than that His forebodings should become crystallised in the thought of death. Even Messiah must fulfil His vocation, as had the prophets before Him, by faithfulness even unto death. One feels that Schweitzer is emphatically right in stressing, particularly in his treatment of the Supper, the intimate connection between the Passion and the eschatological conception of the Kingdom. The Cup speaks of the Kingdom, the Bread of the Passion : and by the twin parables of the Table Jesus reveals the secret of each. As Schweitzer puts it : "Jesus therefore sets His death in temporal-causal connection with the eschatological dawning of the Kingdom." . . . "By the sacrifice of Himself unto death He ushers in the Messianic feast."<sup>1</sup>

We conclude then that in the words "this is My body" Jesus had definitely in view His approaching death. But was this thought also consciously symbolised in the action of *breaking* the bread ? This is often denied, even by those who admit that the thought of death may have been present in Jesus' mind, on the ground that any such intention would

<sup>1</sup> *Mystery of the Kingdom*, pp. 80, 271.

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certainly have been commented on by one or other of the narrators, if it had any place in the original tradition, and would probably have found expression in the words put on Jesus' lips. Mark-Matthew has the bare words, "this is My body"; Luke has, "this is My body which is given for you"; while Paul's words, where our Authorised Version inserts the word "broken," read in the original simply "this is My body which is on your behalf." Hence it is argued that the action of breaking has no significance except as a necessary preparation; like the benediction it is a mere preliminary to distribution. But surely this is to surrender a piece of symbolism profoundly fitting just because so exquisitely simple. A symbolic action ceases to be effective if it needs to be pointed out, commented on, explained. The nature of symbol is to transcend words, to render words needless. And after all, if the symbolic rather than the realistic interpretation be the true one, the point of the action-symbolism lies not so much in the eating by the disciples, as in the breaking and giving by Jesus. In all the narratives Jesus is represented as breaking the bread —a needless underlining of the act if it were nothing more than a preliminary to the distribution. If such was indeed the point of the symbolism, the idea which Jesus sought to convey through it can have been nothing less than this: "this represents the gift to you of My own person broken in death."

Such an interpretation, though making Jesus' thought at the Supper the crown of His previous

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teaching, adds nothing essentially new to that teaching. If we are to believe the Gospel records at all, Jesus must have constantly hinted at the probability of His death, though there may be room for difference of opinion as to whether He would stress the necessity and redemptive efficacy of that death as clearly as our records would lead us to suppose. Here at the Supper, if at any time, the thought of death must have pressed in hard upon Jesus, and He could hardly have avoided giving expression to it. In this crisis of the Kingdom's fortunes it is the one inevitable idea. It may indeed be that in the distribution of the bread the primary idea symbolised is not so much Jesus' death, isolated from His life and personality, as the thought that He himself in life and death alike is to be the spiritual nourishment and life of His disciples. But at any rate we may claim this, that—whether or no the ideas of ransom, redemption, forgiveness are also present—the truth *is* symbolised that Jesus' death has a positive value for His own.

(3) But may we go a step farther and claim that, although at the original Supper the "covenant cup" had not yet taken the place of the eschatological cup, yet the idea of such a "covenant" and the truths put upon Jesus' lips by the Evangelists and Paul ("My body given *on behalf* of you"; "My blood of the covenant shed on behalf of many" . . . "shed for the remission of sins") were present in Jesus' thought at least in germ as He brake and distributed the bread? In other words, is the gift symbolised not merely a gift *to* Jesus' own, but

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a gift *for* them, on behalf of them? Are we to admit the thought of expiation?

It may be allowed that at first sight the simpler idea of a gift *to* His own accords more naturally with the symbolism of distribution. It is the disciples themselves who are bidden "Take." There is no suggestion of any expiatory sacrifice offered in payment of debt to some Higher Power in the name of humanity. But we have claimed that not only the distribution, but the benediction and the breaking must be taken into account. Is there no thought of the body broken in death and offered as an expiatory sacrifice for the sealing of the Covenant? And is it really likely that Jesus uttered a saying so enigmatic in its very baldness as the words "this is My body" without any explanatory clause such as is provided by "on behalf of you"? Whatever were Jesus' actual words we may be sure that their meaning lay on the surface and would be immediately intelligible to the onlookers. And certainly in the minds of all our authorities, to judge by the covenant saying which they attribute to Jesus and attach to the cup, the symbolism of which had by this time been adjusted to the bread-symbolism, the saying "This is My body" carried a sacrificial reference. Jesus' body was offered as a sacrifice for many—that is unquestionably the meaning which even Mark, the most primitive of our witnesses, reads into the words.

Again it may be admitted that Jesus is not, perhaps, likely to have connected His death as explicitly as Matthew suggests with the idea of the "remission of sins." Jesus even during His life

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claimed power to forgive sins (Mark ii. 10), and for this reason, if for no other, it is improbable that He would expressly single out His *death* as the ransom-price which alone made forgiveness possible. Had Jesus defined the efficacy of His death as pointedly as our records imply, would it, before the event, have been possible for the disciples to comprehend His meaning ? Paul and the Evangelists, writing in the light of Calvary and the Resurrection and the experience of Pentecost, see Jesus' death in a new perspective ; to them these words, which they place on Jesus' lips, are perfectly intelligible, though they might not have been so had they been spoken at this time by Jesus himself. It is not that Paul, or anyone else, has changed Jesus' meaning and wantonly swung it round into new and unintended paths. Rather has the emphasis been shifted by history itself. The fact of the Crucifixion rather than any theory about it has pushed the death of Jesus into the centre of these writers' theology, and has sharpened the precision with which the exact mode of efficacy of that death is defined. May there not be between the words of Jesus as narrated and His words as actually spoken a difference in emphasis which is perfectly appropriate to the difference of outlook between the Redeemer and the redeemed ?

But though Jesus may not have formulated His thoughts about His death so precisely as Paul and the Evangelists might lead us to suppose, this is not to deny that the thoughts themselves may have been present in Jesus' own mind, nor that our writers may be interpreting those thoughts correctly enough

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in the words that they put upon His lips. There is a striking saying of Ignatius (*Ephesians xv.*) that “he that truly possesseth the word of Jesus is able to hearken unto His silence.” Is it too bold a claim that those to whom we owe our accounts, treasuring every recorded word of Jesus, laying hold upon His teaching till it became ever a surer and yet more sure possession, have been able to fill in even His silences and rightly to interpret even the hidden thoughts of their Master at the Table?

We have already touched on the difficulty of supposing that Jesus Himself would express the sealing of a covenant by blood under the symbolism of eating and drinking. But, the symbolism apart, the idea of such a “new covenant,” a covenant too implying forgiveness, is already present in *Jeremiah xxxi.*, a passage which must have been preciously familiar to Jesus. And the thought that the essence of such a covenant is an Atonement wrought by Christ’s sacrifice certainly does not date only from Paul, who himself expressly states that it was part of the tradition which he himself received: “I delivered unto you . . . that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (*I Cor. xv. 3*). And if it be argued, as e.g. by Dr. Rashdall, that the words “according to the Scriptures” are the significant words, and that the idea does not date back to Jesus Himself, but was accepted by Paul “simply and solely on authority”—the authority of Old Testament prophecy—having ere the time of Paul’s Apostleship “resulted from the reflection of the Church in the

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interval which elapsed between the Crucifixion and Paul's conversion ”<sup>1</sup>—if this be argued, the reply is that the only obvious passage which might have suggested the doctrine is Isaiah liii. In which case there seems no cause why the thought may not with equal reason be traced back to Jesus Himself, who undoubtedly identified Himself with the Suffering Servant. Indeed why should not Isaiah's great picture have been before Jesus at the Supper? Do not the words “My blood of the covenant shed *for many*” sound strangely like an echo of the prophet's words where this “*many*” is twice repeated: “My righteous servant shall justify many”; . . . “He bore the sin of many”? If this be so we seem justified in concluding that Jesus Himself, though not perhaps quite so explicitly as our accounts imply, did attach a certain expiatory value to His approaching death. Nay more, it may be that words very similar to the covenant-words at the Supper were actually spoken, though we think it probable that originally they may have been attached, in some modified form, to the words “this is My body” rather than to the later cup-blood symbolism. Nor, we repeat again, is it surprising that the cup, which for the Redeemer symbolised the dawning of the Kingdom, became for the redeemed the symbol of His Passion; for the secret of the Passion is substantially this—that the coming of the Kingdom with power is dependent upon the atonement which Jesus offers. By the sacrifice of Himself unto death Christ ushers in the

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, pp. 80, 82, 96.

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Messianic feast. After all the covenant idea is at the heart of the Supper from the point of view of the eschatological and the "orthodox" critic alike.

"In substance the Supper was an act of self-dedication in which Jesus 'covenanted' (Luke xxii 29, *διατίθημι ὑμῖν*, 'I covenant to you a kingdom') that the life He was willingly surrendering in the cause of the Kingdom should be a sacrifice to God on Israel's behalf. As other Jewish martyrs had done before His time, He offered His body and blood to God as a 'propitiation' (*iλασμός*) on behalf of His people, and in a faith which not even the shadow of the Cross could darken he gave tryst to those who had been with Him in His trials at the banquet of the redeemed. He would meet them again at His table in His kingdom. This 'covenant' (*διαθήκη*) is the essence of the rite. As 2 Macc. vii. 36 says of the martyrs who 'offered up both body and life for the laws of their fathers, entreating God that He would speedily be propitiated for their nation,' Jesus also 'died under a God-given covenant of everlasting life.'"<sup>1</sup>

(4) It remains finally to consider in the light of Jesus' own thoughts the words "this do in remembrance of Me" and the question of a definite institution of the Sacrament by our Lord. Two chief *a priori* objections are commonly urged against the probability of such an institution.

First, Jesus was no institutionalist, and it is inherently improbable that He would institute sacraments. If we mean that Jesus is not likely to

<sup>1</sup> B. W. Bacon, *Jesus and Paul*, 7 f.

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have ordained one fixed and unalterable order of symbolic action and made it an essential condition of communion with His spirit that this order should be invariably followed, then we are right in denying that He was an institutionalist. But are we also to deny that He "instituted" e.g. the Lord's Prayer? It is generally admitted that Baptism was not instituted by Jesus, and after all, if we claim Dominical institution for the Eucharist, this one rite would hardly constitute Jesus an "institutionalist." If it be urged, as e.g. by Dean Inge, that "Christ made no provision for a Church such as actually grew out of the little society of His followers"<sup>1</sup> and therefore had no interest in providing the Church with a sacrament, we may reply with Gore that it is "a mistake to ask whether Christ while on earth *founded* the Church, for it was already in existence. We understand nothing if we do not understand this."<sup>2</sup> In other words Jesus already belonged to a Church, an institutional Church, the Old Testament Church, and deliberately allowed His Church to build itself on that foundation. He came "not to destroy, but to fulfil," not to cast down the existing institution, but to re-establish it upon a new basis. It is therefore historically inaccurate to call Jesus an anti-institutionalist. Though no doubt concerned more with great principles than with any special form of institutionalism, His aim was not to destroy the latter but to infuse the former into it. *A priori* this is no reason why Jesus should not have instituted a sacrament. Jesus was Himself a Churchman, and

<sup>1</sup> *Lay Thoughts*, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Reconstruction of Belief*, p. 662.

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where a Church is, there inevitably, universally, there are sacraments. As Dean Inge himself adds in the context already quoted : “The Gospel was from the first founded on brotherly love, and it is not possible for a band of brothers to be individuals in their religion. . . . As soon as the Church began to be it took the form . . . of a community of initiated persons, joined together in the worship of one deity, with whom they maintained a mystical bond of union, through sacramental ceremonies shared in common.” He who spoke the Gospel prepared the way for the Sacrament. We do not claim that He actually “instituted” it ; but there is at least no *a priori* reason why He should not have done so.

Secondly the probability of an institution is challenged from the eschatological standpoint. If Jesus shared the apocalyptic outlook of his age and expected the immediate coming of the Kingdom, what need was there for His instituting a rite to be observed after His death which He believed would be the signal for the divine intervention ? It was only the breakdown of Jesus’ own expectations which made necessary the institution of an organised Church with sacraments. But though the influence of such apocalyptic conceptions on Jesus’ thought is undoubtedly far-reaching, and presents us with a “real and baffling problem,”<sup>1</sup> it is equally certain that eschatology does not exhaust the mind of Jesus. What of the parables and sayings which describe a gradual spiritual process at work in the Church of

<sup>1</sup> Moffatt, *The Theology of the Gospels*, p. 42.

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the future? Such a Church would seem to be something more than what Dean Inge has called “a brief stop-gap till the Messianic Kingdom of God should come.” Certainly in its own estimation even the most primitive Church was more than that: and this holds good even when apocalyptic hopes were at their height: “This expectation of the speedy dissolution of the world, and absorption of the Church in the Kingdom, did not hinder their sense of present duties. Alike at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Corinth, and elsewhere, you would have seen the Church behaving like a permanent society which has to take counsel for the future, and organise itself and use its resources. It has certain sacred meetings and sacred rites, and it is under a certain rule of order which was delivered to it (‘the tradition’) by its apostolic founders.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed it would seem to be a fallacy that there was any incompatibility between the expectation of an early coming of the Kingdom and a belief in the Church as a permanent institution. Paul, at least when he wrote his earlier epistles, shared this expectation to the full, yet he evidently never felt it inconsistent with the “tradition” that the Lord had enjoined the repetition of His Supper “till He come.” Jesus’ supposed apocalyptic outlook is no *a priori* objection to the possibility of an institution.

Indeed it might even be argued that the eschatological atmosphere of the Supper adds to the probability of an injunction to repeat the rite. “This generation shall not pass away until all these

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *op. cit.*, p. 659.

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things be accomplished. . . . But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 30-32). Might there not be room for the use of such a memorial to bridge the gulf "till He come"? May not Jesus Himself have intended repetition as His "own tender '*au revoir*,' and His most considerate '*rendez-vous*,' at which His disciples may meet Him and may hold communion with Him until He return to consummate their union, and to drink new wine with them in the Kingdom of God"?<sup>1</sup> If it be argued that Jesus never before gave thought to the subsequent practice of His disciples, the reply is that now inevitable separation looms before them, and repetition might well be enjoined until the eschatological reunion. The very fact that the Supper was not the annual Passover feast but the weekly *Kiddush* meal, the repetition of which may already have become a habit, would suggest to Jesus the appropriateness of its repetition as a memorial of His sacrifice and a pledge of His return. Thus Mr. N. P. Williams,<sup>2</sup> writing from the point of view of an Anglo-Catholic, though unable in the light of criticism to base the case for a Dominical institution on the words "this do in remembrance of Me," is yet willing to accept the eschatological declaration as a satisfactory equivalent of an actual institution. Paraphrasing Jesus' words he makes him say: "The next celebration of this Feast . . . will be the mystery

<sup>1</sup> D. S. Guy, *Was Holy Communion Instituted by Jesus?* p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> In *Essays Catholic and Critical*.

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itself, consummated in the Kingdom of God, that is, in My Church, which in its universalised or Catholic form will be constituted by virtue of the great events which lie before us, My death and resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Ghost.” A strange interpretation indeed, and yet an indication that the acceptance of the eschatological position need be no bar to a belief in the institution.

Our conclusion then is this: in the light of our previous analysis of the records the evidence for a definite institution by Jesus is quite uncertain; in the light of what we know of Jesus’ own mind it is quite probable. Greater certainty than this can probably never be reached. It is possible enough that the custom of repeating the rite originated spontaneously among the disciples, apart from any injunction by Jesus, or was merely the continuation of the already established habit of holding a weekly *Kiddush*, and that a pledge originally given once for all was thus gradually transformed into a sacrament to be repeated. But the sacrament is not thereby invalidated. For surely the repetition of a symbolic act is justified every time that one has occasion to recall and give thanks for the ideas originally expressed in that act. For Jesus Himself the act may have been complete in itself, its significance may have been limited to the moment of crisis, without any intention of repetition. But such repetition may nevertheless be perfectly in accord with His mind. Indeed it would have been in harmony with Jesus’ methods of instruction, had He never actually uttered the words of institution, but

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left His disciples to interpret for themselves, in the light of the Holy Spirit's guidance, the significance of His symbolic actions and words in the Upper Room. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." "The Spirit of truth . . . shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John xiii. 7, xvi. 14). Indeed even if our Church to-day should experience in the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper "a meaning which goes beyond what many conceive to have been the limitations of our Lord's conscious knowledge before His Crucifixion, we can still maintain that this meaning nevertheless was in a true sense in the Lord's mind, and that one great purpose of the sending of the Holy Spirit was to enable us to exhibit ever freshly the riches of meaning which were latent in what our Lord said and did upon earth."<sup>1</sup>

Does it then make any vital difference if criticism has thrown doubt on the words of institution? Many scholars have not felt so. For example that fearless thinker, Dr. Barnes, claims that even if it be held proved that Jesus did not institute the Sacrament "the traditional importance of the Holy Communion in our liturgy remains undiminished." True we miss the uplifting experience of obedience to an express command. Some too may feel that the historical value of the Sacrament is affected. But our observance of the Supper is not on that account invalidated. The test of reality, as Herbert Spencer has said, is persistence, and if the Lord's Supper has persisted for nineteen hundred years,

<sup>1</sup> O. C. Quick, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

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it is because the reality of its dynamic quality has been vindicated by experience. Even though some may hold that the authority of sacraments as based on their origin is gone, we still have to explain the fact of experience that sacraments do mediate spiritual grace. Says Canon Quick once again : “ If we believe that such an interpretation is not false to our Lord’s mind and intention, we believe it largely on the ground that that mind and intention have been continuously revealed in the Christian experience in which the Eucharist has played so important a part. . . . How far the vision of an organised Church on earth, enduring through countless centuries and creating the ecclesiastical machinery for the continuous administration of the Sacrament, was present to His conscious knowledge, we cannot pretend to determine. But even if it were not so present, it does not at all follow that the sacramental organisation of the Church, which multifarious influences have doubtless helped to shape, is necessarily alien from His mind or can in no sense claim His authority.”<sup>1</sup> And even the most sober-minded anti-sacramentalist will confess with Bishop Butler that “ external acts of piety and devotion, and the frequent returns of them, are necessary to keep up a sense of religion which the affairs of the world will otherwise wear out of men’s heart.” He is blind indeed who does not see that for untold millions of believers the sacrament of the Eucharist has been the means by which they have drawn near to the Living Christ and found rest unto

<sup>1</sup> O. C. Quick, *Op.cit.*, pp. 193 f.

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their souls. And dare we say that this is contrary to Jesus' own thought and purpose? "Before we leave this subject," writes Bishop Gore,<sup>1</sup> "let us remind ourselves that that which seems so difficult, if approached as an intellectual problem, has seemed quite otherwise to the hearts of Christians in all generations. It is not a barbaric instinct to which these words (Jesus' words at the Supper) have appealed, but the highest spiritual aspirations of men, and 'the Holy Communion' has created and nourished in all generations of Christians the sense of 'Christ in us the hope of glory.'"

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *Op. cit.*, p. 680.

## CHAPTER V

### The “Breaking of Bread” in the Primitive Church

IN the preceding studies we have endeavoured to reconstruct the procedure at the original Supper of Jesus in the Upper Room and to interpret its meaning for our Lord Himself. We pass to the Supper, its forms of observance and the significance attached to it, in the primitive Christian community.

It is not perhaps generally recognised that at this point we are confronted by a gulf which has not yet been satisfactorily bridged. The contrast between Jesus' thought at the Last Supper and Paul's fully developed Eucharistic doctrine is patent. But where does the break occur? Schweitzer reminds us that much of the difference and opposition “which reveals itself between the teaching of Jesus and that of Paul exists also as between the teaching of Jesus and that of primitive Christianity itself.”<sup>1</sup> Any “new element” was not so much brought into Christianity by the Apostle as already found there by him. The religion of the primitive community is not identical with the teaching of Jesus but a new faith founded upon the facts of His death and resurrection. Paul himself belongs to

<sup>1</sup> *Paul and His Interpreters*, E.T., p. 43.

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primitive Christianity, so that the contrast which has provoked the much discussed problem of "Jesus and Paul" is in fact not so much a difference between two individuals, the Master and His Apostle, as between Jesus' religion and that of the first generation of His worshippers. In a word it may be that the break of which we speak took place earlier than is generally supposed, so that we must beware of assuming continuity between the stage just discussed in the development of New Testament sacramental teaching and that which we now approach.

When we speak of "the Primitive Church" it is necessary to distinguish two separate fields of enquiry — the Jewish-Christian community of Jerusalem and Palestine, and the Gentile-Christian world covered by the Pauline missions. Though the fundamental relation between the two is such that each throws light upon the other, the evidence regarding each requires to be carefully discriminated. Lietzmann for example, in his recent monograph,<sup>1</sup> endeavours to prove that the original Lord's Supper developed in the Early Church along two lines:

(a) The Jerusalem type represented by Luke, the *Didache*, and the Egyptian Church; this consisted of bread only (though possibly water may also have been used without consecration) and should be considered merely as deriving from and continuing the habitual Fellowship Meal of Jesus and His disciples.

(b) The Hellenistic and Pauline type represented by I Corinthians, Mark and Matthew, which was a

<sup>1</sup> *Messe und Herrenmahl* Bonn, 1926.

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true “Agapé-Eucharist,” a real meal beginning with bread and concluding with wine and having as its special object the commemoration of the Last Supper. Lietzmann allows but little weight to Jewish influence in the evolution of the eucharistic liturgy, and thinks that the Pauline type of the Supper would inevitably supersede the original simple meal of joyous fellowship of which we have traces in Acts ii. 46.

In Jewish and Gentile fields alike the observance of the Lord’s Supper can be properly understood only before the background of the universal custom of holding common religious meals. Of these sufficient has already been said.<sup>1</sup> The points of resemblance between the Christian common meal as we meet it in the New Testament and the meals of the Therapeutæ and the Essenes are obvious, while the fact that an analogy had from the first been drawn between the Supper and heathen banquets appears from a famous passage in St. Augustine’s treatise against Faustus the Manichean, in which the latter is represented as trying to minimise the differences between Christianity and heathenism by alleging that Christians have merely “turned the heathen sacrifices into Christian love-feasts.”<sup>2</sup>

The relation to the Eucharist of such an Agapé or “love-feast,” in which is alleged to be found the Christian parallel to the communal religious banquets of heathenism, has been discussed so often and so

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 24f., 33f.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Contra Faust*, lib. XX, chap. xx.

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fully that the briefest treatment only is called for.<sup>1</sup> Indeed the less need be said because one feels that unjustified prominence has been given to the “Agapé” in the period covered by the New Testament. The references to the Agapé in the New Testament, and indeed even beyond the New Testament, are the scantiest, and it is questionable whether we have not been reading more than is justifiable into such references as there are, and thus creating a problem—the relation of Eucharist to Agapé—which does not arise till after the New Testament period.

The only definite reference in the New Testament (if indeed it is a reference) to the “Agapé” in the sense of a “love-feast” is in Jude 12 : “These people are stains on your love-feasts ; they have no qualms about carousing in your midst, they look after none but themselves” (Moffatt). In the parallel passage in 2 Peter ii. 13, where the Revised Version again adopts ἀγάπαις, it is probable that the Textus Receptus ἀπάταις should be retained, the text having been corrupted through approximation to Jude. Even if ἀγάπαις be authentic in 2 Peter it adds nothing whatever to the evidence of Jude. And even here there is no hint of any connection between these “love-feasts” and the Eucharist, though the allusions in Acts and 1 Corinthians to social meals in conjunction with the Eucharist and the emergence of the name “Agapé” into common use by Ignatius early in the second century (Ad

<sup>1</sup> See especially J. F. Keating, *The Agapé and the Eucharist*, and P. Batiffol, *Etudes d'Histoire et de Théologie Positive*, 1920.

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Smyrn. viii.) suggest that in Jude we may have the first recorded use of what eventually became a technical name for the Christian fellowship-meal. There is of course no doubt that the common meal of the earliest Christians and the table-fellowship which was abused at Corinth do answer to the later “Agapé.” Jesus Himself, when at the last Supper He gave to the inner circle His “new commandment” of love (John xiii. 34), consecrated the Supper as a “love-feast”; but it is likely that the word “Agapé,” as a technical name for the common religious meals of the Church, did not come into use until long after the reality enshrined in the word was enjoyed.

Indeed Batiffol<sup>1</sup> would deny the technical use of the word even in Jude, where he takes it to mean simply “L’ensemble des fideles,” those who are addressed in verses 3, 17, 20 as *ἀγαπητοί*, the loving fellowship of believers whose harmony is marred by “these filthy dreamers” (v. 8). ‘Αγάπαις like δόξας (8) and αἰσχύνας (13) is simply an emphatic use of the plural for the singular. Batiffol thus eliminates the Agapé, as distinct from the Eucharist, altogether from the New Testament, and holds that when Christians “came together to eat” it was solely to partake of the Eucharist. His conclusion is that “il n’est pas question d’agapés dans le Nouveau Testament.”

Without going the whole way with Batiffol it should probably be admitted that as applied to the conditions envisaged in Acts and 1 Corinthians, the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 293.

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technical use of the term “Agapé” to denote a “love-feast” distinct from the Eucharist is an anachronism. As against the ordinary view that the fellowship-meal, later known as the Agapé, was followed by a separate liturgical rite as its culminating point, Jülicher is almost certainly right (at least for the earliest period) when he says : “Paul knows nothing of an Agapé and of a Eucharist following it, but of a single community-feast, which from beginning to end was a *κυριακὸν δεῖπνον*, or at least ought to have been.”<sup>1</sup> As yet no sharp distinction is drawn between the whole meal as the symbol of a common brotherhood and the special religious rite. The whole has a sacred character as a “Supper of the Lord.”

The three stages in the evolution of the Christian Supper, the two parts of which were eventually differentiated and known respectively as Agapé and Eucharist, would seem to be somewhat as follows :

(a) The common meal is originally not so much a commemoration of the Last Supper and an act of communion with Christ as a means of perpetuating that table-fellowship of disciples with each other and with their Lord which even in Jesus’ life-time had become a habit. It is a repetition not only, or particularly, of the Last Supper, but rather of that series of such meals of which the Supper in the Upper Room was in fact “the last.” So far the “Agapé” idea predominates over the Eucharistic.

(b) A tendency begins, even within the New Testament, to distinguish between the solemn

<sup>1</sup> Jülicher, *Theologische Abhandlungen*, p. 232.

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liturgical acts of communion and the ordinary religious meal in which they are enshrined. Hence it is held that either at the end of the feast, as its climax, bread and wine were taken and after thanksgiving were eaten and drunk as a special means of communion;<sup>1</sup> or alternatively that this solemn blessing and partaking took place whenever bread and wine were passed round in the course of the feast.<sup>2</sup> It must be insisted that “Agapé” and “Eucharist” are still parts of one religious meal, the “Lord’s Supper”; but the Eucharistic act is becoming differentiated as a distinct element within the whole. As will be argued later, this development is parallel with a growing inclination to relate the Lord’s Supper to the Last Supper in particular.

(c) The third stage, which is reached only after New Testament times, is the final dissociation of the Eucharist from the Agapé as a result of the abuses which disgraced the communal meal, and of which we have an indication in 1 Corinthians and Jude. Finally so unseemly did the Agapé become that we find Clement of Alexandria, at the close of the second century, expressing indignation that so lofty a name should be given to carousals so disgraceful, and complaining that “charity has fallen from heaven into the soups.”<sup>3</sup> The gradual evolution of the Lord’s Supper through these three stages will be evident throughout our study. Meantime we may think of the Eucharist as the precious kernel enshrined in the common fellowship-meal which,

<sup>1</sup> So Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age*, ii., p. 283 ff.

<sup>2</sup> So Jülicher.

<sup>3</sup> *Paed.*, ii., i. 5.

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while admitting the anachronism involved in so early a use of the technical name, we may for convenience call the “Agapé.”

Having cleared the ground by this preliminary discussion of the relation of the Eucharist to the Agapé we revert to the observance of the Supper in the primitive Palestinian community. Here our evidence is limited to one brief passage in Acts (ii. 41-47) where we learn that the new converts after Pentecost (v. 42) “devoted themselves to the instruction given by the Apostles and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers”; and again (v. 46) that “day after day they resorted with one accord to the temple, and broke bread together in their own homes, and took their food with a glad and simple heart.” The parallelism between the two verses is obvious, and it may be that verses 46-47 are a doublet version of verse 42. It is suggested<sup>1</sup> that verses 42-43 may have been introduced by a redactor as a link joining up his account of Pentecost with a more ancient fragment, verses 44-47, describing the life of the primitive community. Similarly Batiffol distinguishes between the two fragments,<sup>2</sup> regarding verses 42-43 as derived from a Pauline source, verses 46-47 from a Jewish Christian source in which the Supper appears as a private rite. We may, however, pool the ideas supplied by the two fragments; the significant clauses are these:

(a) “They devoted themselves to . . . *the fellowship*,”—τῇ κοινωνίᾳ. The use of the word

<sup>1</sup> e.g. by Goguel, *L'Eucharistie*, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 285.

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here appears altogether too vague to mean the act of “communion” *par excellence* (I Cor. x. 16), and can hardly have any sacramental significance. Rather does it emphasise the brotherly relations of Christians and is echoed by the words ‘shared’ (*διεμέριζον*) in verse 45 and ‘with one accord’ (*όμοθυμαδὸν*) in verse 46. It should be remembered that *κοινωνία* is for Paul a favourite word descriptive of the unity of believers with each other and with their Lord (I Cor. i. 9, etc.) and we may even have here an anticipation of Paul’s use of the word in a concrete sense to mean the actual “body of believers.” For, to quote Dr. Anderson Scott, “its equivalent in Aramaic (*Chabūra*, for which see pp. 35, 44f.) was in current use to describe a group of companions or partners, sharers in a common life. And in particular the word was used to describe the group of friends who might unite to celebrate the Passover Feast in common. . . . If, as seems probable, the group of followers whom Jesus gathered most closely round Himself, took or had given to it some distinguishing name, that name would naturally be ‘the *Chabūra* of Jesus’; and the name *κοινωνία* or Fellowship under which it first presents itself in the Acts is simply the Greek for *Chabūra*.<sup>11</sup> If this be admitted it is probable that we have here a direct reference to the Table-fellowship in which the communal spirit found its most natural expression; this becomes more explicit in

(b) the phrases “in the breaking of bread” (*τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου*, v. 42) and “breaking bread at home”

<sup>11</sup> *Christianity According to St. Paul*, p. 160.

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(κλῶντες τε κατ' οἶκον, v. 46). In verse 42, “the breaking of bread,” as seems proved by its mention as on a par with “doctrine” and “prayers,” clearly has a religious significance. Following as it does the reference to “the Fellowship,” the common meal appears as the symbol of that Fellowship. It is something more than the mere communal meal which is an inevitable sequel to a community of goods. It is the central pledge and symbol of a common life and common faith. But it is not clear that any connection is yet consciously drawn between such a meal and the Last Supper, that the “breaking of bread” is regarded as a repetition, enjoined by Jesus, of the Last Supper, or that the unique sacramental character of the Last Supper was as yet explicitly realised.

(c) Verse 46 states that the Christians “broke bread together *in their own homes*.” This, following immediately after the words “they resorted with one accord to the temple,” seems to imply a contrast between the temple worship, in which the Christian disciples still participated as loyal Jews, and the specifically Christian gatherings held in their own homes, for which the “breaking of bread” provided the occasion. The frequent common meals, which sprang out of the spontaneous impulses of Christian fellowship, would supply the opportunity for their distinctively Christian, as opposed to Jewish, worship. Dr. W. O. E. Oesterley has pointed out that, whereas the meagreness of detail which has come down to us seems to suggest that early Christian public worship must largely have followed Jewish models, the

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Eucharist, which we here have in germ, would seem from the first to have been a specifically Christian rite.<sup>1</sup> Though fundamentally on the lines of the ordinary Jewish table-communion, the “breaking of bread” from the first became the symbol of an exclusive and distinctively Christian discipleship. Thus the contrast in verse 46 is not so much between the public worship of the temple and the private worship of the home as between the Jewish observances, by devotion to which the new converts proved themselves still loyal Jews, and the “breaking of bread” which marked them as specifically Christians.

(d) The grammatical structure of verse 46 shows that the “breaking of bread” is linked up as a concurrent action with the fact that “they took their food in gladness and singleness of heart.” In the word “gladness” (*ἀγαλλίασις*) Spitta traces the word technically used to describe “eschatological Joy,” and accordingly finds here a reference to the special eschatological significance of the Supper and the glad expectation of the Messianic feast.<sup>2</sup> In view of what has already been said concerning the eschatological colouring of the ritual at the Last Supper this idea is attractive enough. But there is certainly nothing in the text here to suggest eschatological expectations, and it is quite open to explain the reference<sup>3</sup> as merely to “the joy which the Christians found in their simple and pure life.”

<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy*, pp. 84, 96, 99 f.

<sup>2</sup> Spitta, *Zur Geschichte und Litteratur des Urchristentums*, I, p. 289.

<sup>3</sup> As e.g. does Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

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The fact that “breaking of bread” is mentioned in one breath with “taking their food” confirms the position that the “breaking of bread,” though already of religious significance, is still part of a real nourishing (the force of *τροφῆς*) meal and not purely ceremonial and symbolical. This Batiffol (whose position is that the Eucharist was from the first a purely religious rite dissociated entirely from the communal meal) denies. The phrase “taking their food” is a mere biblical expression—“une tournure biblique bien connue”—meaning simply that their “general outlook on life” was one of gladness and simplicity.<sup>1</sup> But all we know of the community life and collective meals of the early Christians suggests that the reference here is to a real meal, the significance of which is as yet fraternal rather than mystical. Indeed it may well be that some of the poorer members of the community found in the “breaking of bread” their chief means of existence. The Eucharist had not yet begun to be differentiated from the Agapé; the one implied the other. It is impossible meantime even to define the relation of the “breaking of bread” in its specifically ceremonial character (if indeed either the symbolical significance or even the name itself had as yet emerged) to the nourishing fellowship-meal which provided its setting—to decide whether by the “breaking of bread” is meant the common meal itself or some particular liturgical action at the common meal. The prevalent opinion has doubtless been that from the first the common meal, the

<sup>1</sup> Batiffol, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

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symbol of a general fellowship, was followed by specific Eucharistic acts and words. But the probability is that, at least at this earliest stage, not even this distinction can be drawn. So far as there was yet any observance of “the Lord’s Supper” the common meal itself *was* that Supper.

We note that there is no mention here of the dispensing of the cup, though it is dangerous to found upon an *argumentum e silentio*, especially when we are dealing with a mere summary. In any case the omission would not mean that the cup had not its place in the common meals. But can it yet have had its significance as the symbol of the sacrificial shedding of Messiah’s blood ? The evidence does seem to show that at the earliest period the emphasis was placed not on the cup, which was a subordinate feature and had another place and function than that which belonged to it in the Pauline Supper, but on the bread. “The rite took its earliest name from the Loaf as *a parte potiori.*”<sup>1</sup> Hence, so far as any symbolical meaning yet attached to the meal as a religious rite, the idea symbolised is the unity of fellow-Christians rather than any mystic union with Christ or commemoration of His death.

Indeed there is no sign that in the meals of which Acts ii. gives us so dim a picture there is any conscious perpetuation of a memorial instituted by Jesus. Though there is mention of “doctrine” there is no hint that in “breaking bread” Christians are showing obedience to an explicit command of Jesus, nor indeed that there is anything specifically

<sup>1</sup> Anderson Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

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ceremonial in this “breaking of bread.” It is doubtless tempting to argue that, as we have in the Troas incident (Acts xx. 7-12) a “breaking of bread” which is certainly ceremonial and “eucharistic,” the present example may be equated with it so that from the very first the “breaking of bread” becomes a commemoration of the Last Supper, and we can therefore trace a direct evolution of the Eucharist from the Supper in the Upper Room to the time when, under Paul’s influence, the rite took definite form. It may be so: but it is at least strange that neither in connection with the Jerusalem Church, nor indeed at Troas, is there any mention of the drinking of that cup which became the central symbol of that commemoration “till he come,” and that, while there is much emphasis on the “fellowship” of brother Christians there is no allusion to the mystic communion with Christ nor to the redemptive efficacy of His “covenant-blood.”

It is safer perhaps to suppose that the “breaking of bread” was at its origin a simple social phenomenon in harmony with the manner of life of the earliest Christians. “The common meal was the consequence and at the same time the concrete expression of their collective life.”<sup>1</sup> But as the theology of Christ’s death developed, as that death, at first regarded merely as a defeat gloriously vindicated in the resurrection, gradually became stressed as the chief factor in Christ’s redemptive work, it would become natural at each gathering more and more to recall the death and while at table to invoke

<sup>1</sup> Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

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the memory of the Last Supper—as does Paul himself in 1 Cor. xi. The “breaking of bread” would thus gradually come to be regarded as a repetition of the Last Supper, and the Eucharist would begin to differentiate itself as the central feature of the common meal. This would be all the more inevitable if, as we have reason to suppose, visions of the Risen Christ were seen at these common meals.<sup>1</sup> The Emmaus story shows that the Christians were early conscious of a mysterious presence of the Master with them especially when they “broke bread” (Luke xxiv. 30 f.). Indeed one is inclined to suggest that the name “breaking of bread” was given to the common meal only after the thought of a perpetuation of the Last Supper took shape, and is used in Acts only by anticipation in the narrative of this earliest stage. For if the primitive “breaking of bread” is to be related at all to the Last Supper it is to it as the climax of a series, the last and most significant of many habitual meals presided over by the Master in the days of His flesh, of which the “breaking of bread” is a continuation after His glorification.

We conclude then that the primitive “breaking of bread” had no more explicit reference to the Last Supper than to any other of Jesus’ habitual meals with His disciples. It was simply the communal meal of the members of a collective fellowship, the perpetuation of a custom begun while Jesus was yet with them. But as Christians began to meditate on the deeper meaning of the Passion, probably

<sup>1</sup> See references quoted, Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

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influenced also by visions of the Risen Christ, they began to look on every common meal as a reproduction of that last memorial Supper in the Upper Room. The next step was inevitably to grasp the profounder truth that Jesus Himself was mysteriously present at this table-fellowship, and that its divinely intended purpose was not to be merely the symbol of the brotherhood of Christians but a means of communion with their Lord Himself.

## CHAPTER VI

### The “Lord’s Supper” in the Pauline Churches

FROM the Church at Jerusalem we pass to the Gentile-Christian sphere of Paul’s missionary activity. “In doing so we must bear in mind that we are making a great leap—a leap in time of a quarter of a century, a leap from a sphere that is purely Jewish-Christian to one that is essentially Hellenic, a leap from a Church under the immediate guidance of the original apostles to one founded by the great apostle of the Gentiles.”<sup>1</sup> How was the Supper observed in a mixed community far removed from the dominant traditions of the headquarters of Judaism and permeated by pagan customs and associations?

Our evidence for the observance in Gentile churches is limited to one important passage in Acts and the 10th and 11th chapters of I Corinthians. In addition there are two doubtful allusions:

Galatians ii. 11-14 (where Peter is upbraided by Paul for first eating with Gentile converts and then withdrawing himself from them) is held by some to be evidence of the existence in Antioch of a common religious meal—presumably the “Lord’s Supper”—participation in which was a pledge of membership of the community. Though there is nothing in the

<sup>1</sup> Lambert, *The Sacraments in the New Testament*, p. 327.

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text to prove conclusively that anything more than a private meal is here in question, it may be argued that if nothing more were involved than a question of private etiquette on Peter's part such severe criticism from Paul would hardly have been justified.

In Acts xxvii. 35-36 the meal taken aboard ship, when in peril off Malta, is, according to the true (i.e. shorter) text, certainly only a simple meal. The phrase "he took bread and gave thanks to God" ( $\lambda\alpha\beta\omega\nu \dot{\alpha}\rho\tau\omega\nu \epsilon\nu\chiar\iota\sigma\tau\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$ ) no doubt later became technical of the Eucharist. But Paul's "thanksgiving" before he "broke bread" was an ordinary act of piety common to Jew and Christian alike before partaking of food. Some authorities however (e.g. Blass, in his " $\beta$ -text" representing the "Roman form" of Acts) add after  $\epsilon\sigma\theta\iota\epsilon\nu$  the words  $\epsilon\pi\iota\delta\iota\deltao\nu\kappa\dot{\alpha} \eta\mu\bar{\iota}\nu$ —"distributing it to us also"—thus undoubtedly suggesting a celebration of the Lord's Supper. The variant is interesting if only as a hint that originally there was no such incongruity as would afterwards have been felt between a celebration of the Eucharist and an ordinary, not to say hurried, repast.

The one passage of first importance in Acts is the account of the celebration at Troas (Acts xx. 7-12). The atmosphere is one of much greater formality than in Acts ii. The very mention of "many lights" suggests a solemn religious gathering. In a busy heathen commercial city the Christians can no longer meet daily for worship as was possible in the simpler Palestinian communities, and the formal gathering for public worship is now held on

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“the first day of the week.” That the day is Sunday is not merely fortuitous—contingent upon the accident that Paul was due to leave the next day: the first day of the week is already regarded as the proper day for religious observance and for the celebration of the Supper in particular.<sup>1</sup> Paul, who is leaving Troas the next day, breaks bread and tastes it, and after a further long conversation departs at dawn. This “breaking of bread” took place in the evening, as was apparently the custom, possibly because it was at an evening meal that the Lord Himself had so done, but certainly because for the labourers and slaves, who would compose the majority of the Christian congregation, the evening was the only free and suitable hour. That on this occasion the actual hour of celebration was so late as after midnight was due solely to the length of the preliminaries, and is no precedent for the custom of early-morning celebration which came into use only after the church adopted the Roman method of timing the beginning of the day (in this case the Lord’s day) at midnight.

The “breaking of bread” appears here to denote a specifically liturgical action and it is noticeable that, although presumably it took place as usual at a common meal, there is no mention of any such meal. For the reference in *γευσάμενος* can hardly be to the fact that Paul made a meal; if so the order of the words would imply that the meal followed the religious rite whereas, when the two became

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 2, Rev. i. 10, and the later evidence of *Didache*, xiv. 1, Barnab. Ep., xv. 9, Justin, *Apol.*, i. 67, and Pliny’s *Letter to Trajan*.

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discriminated, the meal ordinarily preceded the eucharistic act. The force of the word would rather seem to be liturgical, emphasising the fact that Paul himself as the president and administrant "communicated." But as the historian is naturally writing from Paul's point of view we must not too hastily conclude that any particular importance as yet attached to this act of the "administrant" as distinct from that of the rest of the company. On the other hand we note that already Paul, though a stranger, presides *ex officio*, presumably in virtue of his apostolic authority. There is nothing in the language to prevent us from assuming that this the earliest recorded observance of the Eucharist took place during a meal held about midnight. But it is not the meal but the liturgical rite which is emphasised, suggesting that the solemn religious significance of the action of "breaking bread," as distinct from the meal as such, is asserting itself.

Finally there is once again no mention of the cup, though the distribution of wine as well as of bread may no doubt be assumed, at any rate if it be supposed that a regular meal is in question. But the emphasis on the loaf already noted in Acts ii. 42 ff. is confirmed. Indeed, though the gathering here described is much more formal and ceremonious, the parallelism with the brief summary in Acts ii. is strikingly close : "The narrative squares with the little sketch of Acts ii. 42 : Paul proclaims to the believers of Troas the 'doctrine' ( $\deltaιδαχη$ ) of the Apostles ; the assembled believers are engaged pre-eminently in an act of 'fellowship' ( $κοινωνια$ ) ;

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their gathering being religious cannot but have taken the form of ‘prayer’ ( $\pi\rho\sigma\epsilon\nu\chi\eta$ ) ; they also celebrated as a company the ‘breaking of bread.’<sup>1</sup>

Turning now to Paul’s Epistles we find our most important material in 1 Corinthians, chapters x. and xi. It will be convenient first to discuss chapter xi., remembering that for the moment we are concerned with evidence bearing on the outward connections and forms of the observance of the Supper, and reserve for a later discussion the whole question of Pauline doctrine.

It is to the purely fortuitous circumstance that certain disorders happened to require correction at Corinth that we owe even the little information which we possess concerning the celebration of the Eucharist in the Pauline Churches. This very fact should warn us not to attempt to deduce too much from the incomplete data at hand. Paul’s thought is always practical, not systematic. He is dealing here with a particular and abnormal situation, not describing the regular Eucharist, much less laying down a fixed liturgy for its observance. “The case of the Corinthian Church is pathological.”<sup>2</sup> An ethical problem has to be dealt with, not a liturgical system expounded. And, as Dr. Anderson Scott well reminds us, this “interlocking or interpenetration of the religious and the ethical is one of the most characteristic features in St. Paul’s writings. . . . The narrative of the Institution of the Eucharist might never have been written had

<sup>1</sup> Batiffol, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> Frankland, *The Early Eucharist*, p. 50.

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not the Apostle seen in the meaning of the rite a great and sufficient motive for brotherly conduct within the community.”<sup>1</sup> The exigencies of the practical teacher dealing with a specific situation must be taken into account in any attempt to reconstruct from Paul’s words the Lord’s Supper as it was normally observed in the first Gentile congregations.

*1 Corinthians xi. 18-34* must be examined later with special reference to Pauline doctrine. But the passage also provides us with certain data as to the form of observance. From Paul’s account we would deduce that it was the habit of the Corinthians to gather frequently for a meal including at its close<sup>2</sup> the Eucharistic commemoration concerning which Paul here gives as his opinion that it was commanded by the Lord Himself at the Last Supper as a memorial of His death “ till He come.”

The conjunction of verses 18 and 20 might even seem to suggest that *every* time Christians met together *as a Church* they did so with the express purpose of keeping “ the Lord’s Supper,” and that the celebration was the main end of the gathering. Thus Frankland : “ There are no signs of a regular assemblage for any purpose besides the celebrations of the Lord’s Supper, and the rules for public worship laid down by the Apostle are completely applicable to such services.”<sup>3</sup> The language (“ when ye come together to eat ” . . . “ each one in

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity According to St. Paul*, p. 200 f.

<sup>2</sup> Box, J. Th. St., III, 365, says at the beginning.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

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his eating ”) implies that the sacred rite was no mere symbolical feast but the occasion of a real meal. But though the Supper is a true meal taken for nourishment it is not implied that the Supper is to be celebrated at *every* such meal. “As often as ye eat *this* bread . . .” says Paul. In some way then *this* meal is distinguished from others. It is a real meal, but a collective and fraternal one as opposed to a private one. It is just because the abuses at Corinth are obliterating this distinction that Paul upbraids these church members. Instead of cementing the brotherhood they are breaking it up into cliques, partly it would seem along the lines of social status. Rich and poor alike may bring their own provisions; but once brought these should be pooled in the common repast. But when the rich eat their own share before the whole company is assembled (or at least keep it to themselves—if  $\pi\tau\omega\lambda\alpha\mu\beta\acute{a}v\epsilon i$ , on the evidence of the papyri, is to be translated not “take in advance” but merely “take”), by their selfishness and greed they are turning the meal virtually into a *private* supper ( $i\delta\iota\sigma v \delta\epsilon\pi\nu o v$ ) before the liturgical rite takes place, and thus they are depriving the meal of that characteristic quality which constitutes it “a Lord’s Supper,” that is, the quality of friendship and brotherhood.

The passage raises two main problems :

(1) What is the meaning of “a Lord’s Supper”? ( $\kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\alpha\kappa\circ v \delta\epsilon\pi\nu o v$ .) Paul’s language makes it clear that for himself the Supper was “the Lord’s” in the sense that it was a commemoration of the Lord’s

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death and the means of a mystic communion with Him. But it is not so certain that the title would have the same associations for his Gentile converts at Corinth. It might indeed be argued that by recalling the memory of the Last Supper Paul is expressly reminding his friends of an aspect of the Supper which he missed at Corinth. No doubt the idea of such a *memorial* rite would be familiar enough; it was a common custom for a rich and pious person to leave instructions in his will (*διαθήκη*: Mark xiv. 24) for the holding of a meal in his memory in the temple of a god. But the thought of the Supper as such a commemoration is, as we shall see later, characteristically Paul's own; and it is probably easier to explain the title "Lord's Supper," as current in Corinth, on the analogy of the phrases "cup of the Lord," "table of the Lord," in x. 21. The Supper is "the Lord's," just as the table is "the Lord's," in the sense that it is the Lord who is the Host and offers to the guests His gifts. It is no valid objection that it is in fact the guests themselves who provide the bread and wine, and that Paul has just been reproaching the rich for their failure out of their superabundance to provide for their poorer brethren. From the pagan world the Oxyrhinchus Papyri<sup>1</sup> provide us with an exact parallel. "Chæremon" invites his friend "to dine at the table of Serapis in the Serapæum tomorrow"; "Antonius the son of Ptolemæus" issues an invitation "to dine with him at the table of the Lord Serapis"; Chæremon and Antonius no doubt

<sup>1</sup> Grenfell and Hunt, *Ox. Pap.*, No. 110 and No. 523.

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provide the food ; but it has first been offered to the god, has been consecrated to him in sacrifice, and the table is therefore “the table of the Lord Serapis.” So at the Supper the guests provide the bread and wine which when consecrated constitute the table and the Supper as “the Lord’s.” Is it possible that we have here a hint of how it was that the Eucharist gradually came to be regarded as a sacrifice offered by the worshipper to God ? The elements for the sacramental rite came from the free-will offerings of the people who in that which they had given saw a symbol of themselves. And had not Paul himself taught them that they themselves were “the Body of Christ ” ? Thus the breaking of the bread symbolises the offering or sacrifice of Christ’s living Body, the Church. “This is the Christian sacrifice,” writes Augustine in the *De Civitate*, “the many become one body in Christ. And it is this that the Church celebrates by means of the sacrifice of the altar . . . where it is shown to her that in what she offers she herself is offered.” How easy would be the transition to the idea that at the Eucharist not only did the Church offer herself, Christ’s mystical Body, but actually repeated the sacrifice of the “real ” Body of Christ offered once for all at Calvary.

(2) Secondly, what is the relation of this “Lord’s Supper ” to the communal meal as a whole ? The answer is foreshadowed in our previous discussion of the relation of Eucharist to Agapé. The key verses are I Cor. xi. 20-21 and the main theories are three :

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(a) The “Lord’s Supper” is the concluding portion (later called the “Eucharist”) of the common religious meal (later called the “Agapé”). The meaning of the verses will then be : “It is impossible for you to eat a real Lord’s Supper when you have (before it, at an earlier stage in the meal) behaved so disgracefully at the Agapé.”

(b) The “Lord’s Supper” is a distinct Eucharistic and purely symbolical rite quite separate from the true meal. But if, as seems likely, Paul’s account of the Last Supper is any clue to the observance as he found it at Corinth, then the Eucharistic act would take place “after supper.” (*μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι* v. 25); and in any case the Eucharistic elements alone would hardly provide the occasion for such gluttony as Paul inveighs against. This solution must be pronounced extremely improbable. We therefore adopt the third theory.

(c) The “Lord’s Supper” is the whole meal and covers both those aspects of it which were later differentiated as Agapé and Eucharist. Paul’s words in xi. 20-21 must thus be interpreted as meaning that the selfish conduct of the Corinthian cliques at the communal meals has rendered impossible at them any table-fellowship comparable with that of the Last Supper—when the feast of love terminated in the Eucharist—and therefore worthy to be called a real “Lord’s Supper.”

Nevertheless Paul’s words suggest that, though the whole meal is still regarded as a “Lord’s Supper,” yet a particular emphasis is already being placed on certain solemn liturgical acts, whether it

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be that these took place usually at the close of the meal, as is suggested by the phrase *μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι* —a phrase which Paul is hardly likely to have employed “for historical reasons only and apart from its bearing upon the ordinary practice of the community”<sup>1</sup>—or whether we suppose with Jülicher<sup>2</sup> that whenever in the course of the meal, which would consist of all kinds of viands, bread and wine were passed round, these two elements in particular were the object of the Eucharistic blessing. That the act of “communion” already stands out from the “Lord’s Supper” as a whole will appear from our study of chapter x. The growth of such abuses as Paul is attacking is already preparing the way for the separation of the liturgical rite from the common meal in which it has hitherto been enshrined. In xi. 34, we find the Apostle already advising that to avoid the risk of abuse a meal should be taken at home. Thus almost inevitably, but only at a later stage, the Lord’s Supper became a purely symbolical meal of which the exclusive aim was the nourishment of the soul.

From 1 Cor. xi. little more can be gathered as to the details of the observance at Corinth. On the analogy of the Last Supper (“the same night”; v. 23) and of the celebration at Troas we may perhaps infer that the Supper was usually observed in the evening. That Paul quotes Jesus’ words at the Last Supper is no reason for supposing that these words had yet become a fixed formula at every celebration.

<sup>1</sup> Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>2</sup> *Theologische Abhandlungen*, p. 233.

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There is no evidence that in the Apostolic age there was any such fixed liturgy, much less that any mysterious power was supposed to inhere in the recitation of any such prescribed form of words.

Paul's words "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim (or 'preach') the Lord's death" have been used as evidence that the observance of the Sacrament was always accompanied by preaching, or at least by the mention of Christ's death. Is not Paul's meaning rather that the rite itself is sufficient proclamation? No other preaching is needful. The Sacrament itself is a sermon in action.

Finally the fact that Paul speaks regularly not of "the wine" but of "the cup" raises the question of the cup's contents. Harnack thinks that it was commonly water, and quotes in support Romans xiv. 21, as if this were a general prohibition.<sup>1</sup> The moral which Harnack wishes to point is that for Paul the elements at the Supper are a matter of no consequence, the essence of the Sacrament consisting in the acts of eating and drinking. But however true be this conclusion, the theory on which it is based is most improbable. The verse in Romans can hardly be extended to cover the Eucharistic use of wine, and in any case it is more than counterbalanced by Paul's use in I Cor. xi. 21 of the word *μεθύειν*, which seems conclusively to point to wine. Lietzmann, it will be remembered,<sup>2</sup> supposes water to have been used at Jerusalem and wine in the Gentile churches. It is

<sup>1</sup> *Brod u. Wasser: die eucharistischen Elemente bei Justin; Texte u. Untersuchungen*, vii Band, Heft 2.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 112f.

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generally agreed that neither on exegetical nor historical grounds has Harnack succeeded in making good his case for the use of water.

We turn now to 1 Cor. x. The relevant verses fall into two sections : (a) 1-14 which are important for Pauline doctrine but provide no data for the outward details of celebration ; (b) 15-21 which demand close examination at this point. The passage inveighs against the behaviour of Christians who think it consistent with their profession to take part in feasts held in honour of heathen gods—“demons” Paul calls them. Evidently Christian converts were inclined to regard the religious blessing offered by their new faith as substantially the same as that offered by other cults with which they were familiar—immortality through union with the god—and were still prepared to seek a multiplication of grace by participation in the rites of more than one cult. The prevalence of clubs and craft-guilds, from which Christians could hardly isolate themselves without complete ostracism from the community, would make this a very pressing problem. For it was a question not only of religion but of social etiquette. As Ramsay reminds us,<sup>1</sup> “Corinth was a favourable soil for the growth of associations and clubs of every kind,” and it soon became an urgent question for Christians whether they “might still join in the common meals which constituted a leading feature in the ceremonial binding each of these clubs into a unity.”

Evidently in answer to an enquiry from the

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians*, xxxi.

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Corinthians, Paul shows what is involved in thoughtless participation. A sacrifice is not merely an offering to a cult deity. When at a religious meal the guests partake of the food which has been sacrificed a "communion" is assumed to be established not only between guest and guest but between the deity and his worshippers. To be a partaker in a sacrificial feast is recognised as implying this "communion" between the god and his devotees. How then without disloyalty to his Lord can participation in such feasts be possible for one who is wont to partake of "the cup of blessing which we bless" and of "the bread which we break" wherein is the "communion" of the blood and of the body of Christ?

Again leaving aside for the moment the question of doctrine, for the forms of observance at Corinth the important verse is 16. Two questions emerge:

(1) What is the meaning of "communion" (*κοινωνία*) and of "blessing" (*εὐλογία*)? The words in the context are intimately related, and neither can be understood apart from the other. Is the "communion" conceived as consisting in the whole meal, or does it take place at a particular point during or at the close of a meal? The latter alternative seems most likely. During the meal there came a point at which there was a solemn and liturgical *εὐλογία* or "blessing" of the cup. In spite of the use of the first person plural ("the cup of blessing which *we* bless") we are not necessarily to suppose that the whole company pronounced the benediction. The account of the celebration

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at Troas<sup>1</sup> has suggested that any such liturgical act would rather devolve upon the president. The language of verse 16 suggests these two conclusions :

(a) The *εὐλογία* must be understood to refer to the same action as that contained in *εὐλογοῦμεν*, which verb is obviously parallel with *κλῶμεν* (the cup . . . *which we bless*: the bread *which we break*) and must be interpreted in harmony with that parallelism. This appears decisively to rule out any such explanation of *εὐλογία* as that given by Heinrici,<sup>2</sup> who compares the expression “cup of salvation” (Ps. cxvi. 13) and suggests that “cup of blessing” means merely the cup to which the blessing of the Lord is attached, the cup which, having been blessed by the Lord at His Supper, becomes a gift of grace to those who sup with Him. But the cup is one which “*we bless*.”

(b) The fact that there is placed upon the “breaking” of the bread an emphasis parallel to that on the “blessing” of the cup also renders it unlikely that there is any reference here to the Passover ritual wherein the cup handed by the president to his assistants was called “the cup of blessing.”<sup>3</sup> There is, as will be shown later, no evidence that Paul considers the Last Supper to have been a Passover meal. It must be remembered that not only at the Passover meal but at the common Fellowship Meal on the eve of the Sabbath or of a feast<sup>4</sup> the coming day was greeted by means of the special “cup of blessing” over which there was

<sup>1</sup> p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Heinrici in Meyer’s *Commentary*, V, p. 305.

<sup>4</sup> p. 45.

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recited a liturgical benediction. Herein, no doubt, is the origin of Paul's "cup of blessing." But the ancient Jewish "*Berakha*" has become the instrument of a characteristically Christian "Eucharistic" grace.

We are to suppose, then, that at some point in the meal there took place two parallel liturgical acts, the "blessing" of the cup and the "breaking" of the bread, before the distribution of the respective elements, in virtue of which the cup becomes the "cup of blessing," and both bread and wine assume their special sacramental character. One might almost trace a vestige of the ancient Hebrew idea (e.g. 1 Sam. ix. 13) that the word of blessing is efficacious in releasing a certain divine power upon that over which it is pronounced. So later we find Justin teaching that when the sacred elements have "been thanked upon"<sup>1</sup> "we do not regard (them) as common bread or common drink . . . but are taught that they are the flesh and blood of that very Jesus who had become incarnate."<sup>2</sup> That peculiar emphasis was already being laid upon this act of consecration may be agreed without necessarily supposing with Lake that already there was a prescribed "liturgical formula, which was regarded as endowing the bread and wine with its miraculous properties."<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence that the formula was in fact fixed and not freely improvised by the president as, e.g. in the instructions of the *Didache*.<sup>4</sup>

We conclude then that "the cup of blessing" is the cup over which the "blessing" has been said,

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.*, lxv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Apol.*, lxvi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Lake *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 214.

<sup>4</sup> x. 7. See p. 151.

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so that *εὐλογία* must mean primarily the “grace” offered to God in thanks for His gift of the cup and the bread (so of Jesus Himself in Mark xiv. 22). According to the Jew “all belongs to God, and we share in what is His, when consecrating it by a blessing. . . . The blessing expressed man’s gratitude and thanks ; it gave him the right to accept what belonged to God and God had given, as by a double ratification : God validates His gift in the act of the recognition by man of his acceptance.”<sup>1</sup> The word then appears to shade over into the sense of the act by which the blessing of God is invoked on the elements—an act which is already on the way to becoming a liturgical form which gives to the rite its validity and religious significance. The *εὐλογία* becomes the act of consecration whereby the elements take on the value of a gift of the Lord to His own and become “the cup of the Lord” and “the table of the Lord.” It is the act by which the ordinary cup used throughout the rest of the meal is set apart as a cup of “communion.” The *εὐλογία* thus marks the point at which strictly speaking the “communion” takes place. “‘The cup of blessing which we bless’ is the ‘communion of the blood of Christ’ because in the exercise of the divinely-enjoined Blessing, which was a Thanksgiving, by the proper fulfilment of the directions laid down by our Lord, there was achieved precisely what His empowering works of blessing expressed : ‘This is My body . . . My blood.’”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gavin, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments*, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Gavin, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

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It will be obvious from what has been said that *εὐλογία* and *εὐχαριστία* are ultimately equivalent terms. In the accounts of the Institution the aorist participles *εὐλογήσας* and *εὐχαριστήσας* (Matt. xxvi. 26-27; Mark xiv. 22-23; Luke xxii. 17, 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24) are used as synonyms. The prayer of Thanksgiving (*εὐχαριστία*) quickly became the central portion of the Christian rite of Communion at the Lord's Supper, with the result that the term "Eucharist" was eventually almost inevitably adopted as a name for the service as a whole, or even for the consecrated elements themselves. But the very use of the word in this technical and characteristically Christian sense should serve to remind us that the "Eucharist" must trace its affiliations and origins back through the idea of a *εὐλογία* to the characteristically Jewish idea of "*Berakha*."

What has been said would seem to imply that at this time, though the common meal as a whole was thought of as "a Lord's Supper" to which the Lord invites His own, the Supper as a whole was not the "communion"—this being marked by a definite act of "blessing" and "breaking." And once again we are reminded how, with sure and certain inevitability, the Eucharistic rite would ultimately be entirely separated from the meal in which it had hitherto been enshrined.

(2) 1 Cor. x. 16 also raises once again the question of the order of the distribution of the cup and the bread. The cup is here mentioned before the bread. Is this any guide to the order of distribution at Corinth? We have seen that there is strong evidence

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that the original order—following the *Kiddûsh* and supported by Luke and the *Didache*—was cup, bread. But at Corinth the evidence of 1 Cor. xi., which seems likely to reflect current procedure, almost compels us to assume that the order bread, wine—which ultimately prevailed universally—had already established itself. The reason for the reverse order in x. 16 is either that Paul, mentioning the cup in passing, proceeds to develop at greater length what he has to say about the bread (v. 17); or, more probably, the cup is placed first because Paul sees a more striking analogy between the Christian cup and the pagan libation than between the Christian loaf and the pagan sacrificial meal. Our conclusion is that verses 16 and 21 cannot be considered evidential for the order of distribution at Corinth.

In the light of the foregoing study of the celebration at Corinth we may reasonably conclude that there is an organic unity between the “Lord’s Supper” as we meet it there and the “breaking of bread” of which we have a glimpse at Troas, and that the latter in turn is a natural development from the more primitive rite of the Jerusalem Church. At Troas, it is true, the emphasis is more on the fraternal fellowship of believer with believer, at Corinth upon the mystic communion of the believer with his Lord. But in both accounts we have clearly pictured a religious meal, partaken of in the evening of certain days, usually the first day of the week, by the Church in formal assembly, during which a “benediction” preceded the ritual act of

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eating and drinking. If the celebration at Corinth appears more elaborate it is simply that in Paul's more complete picture details have been filled in which we may probably supply in the bald sketch of the "breaking of bread" at Troas. It is most unlikely that Paul celebrated the Eucharist on different lines at Corinth from those he followed elsewhere, and we may conclude with M. Goguel,<sup>1</sup> that "we have no authority for contesting the unity of practice at the Supper in the Pauline Churches." "And between these and the Churches of other founding there is no substantial reason for drawing any sharp line of distinction."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Goguel, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Frankland, *The Early Eucharist*, p. 83.

## CHAPTER VII

### Light from the Didache

OUTSIDE the New Testament our most valuable authority for the history of the Eucharist during our period is the *Didache*, a kind of combined catechism and booklet of practice and procedure, which appears to be a composite document compiled by affixing a manual of Christian devotion and discipline to a recension of a Jewish manual of moral instruction called “The Two Ways.” Detailed consideration of the *Didache* is outside the scope of these studies, but we may briefly glance at it with a view to discovering how far it corroborates our conclusions as to the evolution of the Sacrament.

Both the date and the place of origin of the *Didache* are uncertain. Harnack<sup>1</sup> would date it not earlier than 130; Paul Sabatier<sup>2</sup> prior to Paul’s missionary journeys. A safe date will be about 100.<sup>3</sup> As for its place of origin, Harnack inclines towards Egypt on the ground of its points of contact with the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, both of which are of Egyptian origin.<sup>4</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> *Chronologie*, I, p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> *La Didache ou l’enseignement des douze apôtres*, p. 159 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Réville, *Les Origines de l’eucharistie*, p. 46; Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>4</sup> Harnack, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

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the famous reference to “this broken bread scattered upon the hills”<sup>1</sup> would not suit the flat levels of Egypt, and Goguel, following Réville and most other critics, prefers Syria and stresses the Jewish affinities of the document.<sup>2</sup>

Though its date is post-Pauline the *Didache* reveals conceptions more primitive than those of Paul, and is for that reason all the more valuable for our purpose. Its view of the Eucharist would appear to approximate more closely to the primitive “breaking of bread” than to the Pauline celebration, though at the same time it seems to presuppose later “Johannine” notions of “life.” Indeed its combination of primitive with more advanced conceptions is one of the most interesting features of this curious document.<sup>3</sup> One seems to discover here some sheltered geological deposit where relics of earlier forms of life are preserved. “Its peculiarities of doctrine and ritual indicate a circulation in regions remote from the main streams of Catholic development, probably within a circle of Jewish Christian communities in some backwater of religious progress.”<sup>4</sup> It is just the preservation in this “backwater” of certain early features which gives the *Didache* a peculiar value for our purpose, and as bearing upon our previous findings the following points are of interest :

(1) The sacramental Supper is evidently still a real meal and not merely symbolic. The Eucharist is still enshrined in a social meal taken by the faithful

<sup>1</sup> See p. 152f.

<sup>3</sup> See Gavin, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Goguel, *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> Frankland, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

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formally assembled on the Lord's own day (Sect. xiv. 1). "After you are *satisfied* ( $\epsilon\mu\pi\lambda\eta\sigma\theta\hat{\eta}vai$ ) give thanks thus," begins Section x., where it is interesting to note that the recension contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, probably compiled in Antioch by the pseudo-Ignatius in the latter half of the fourth century,<sup>1</sup> and written at a time when the Eucharist had become purely symbolical, substitutes the weaker phrase  $\mu\epsilon\tau\grave{a}\ \delta\grave{e}\ \tau\grave{h}\nu\ \mu\epsilon\tau\acute{a}\lambda\eta\psi\iota\omega$ .

(2) In harmony with this we find that there is no evidence that the Eucharist is yet divorced from the common meal, the latter becoming a separate Agapé. True, some scholars, e.g. Zahn,<sup>2</sup> consider that Section ix. has the Eucharist proper in view while Section x. (where, says Zahn,  $\epsilon\mu\pi\lambda\eta\sigma\theta\hat{\eta}vai$  must imply a nourishment more substantial than that of the sacramental elements) has reference to the Agapé. The explanation is rather that the two are not yet clearly differentiated, the Eucharist still having its setting in a "satisfying" meal. In support of this view is the fact that the author of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, better placed than we are to interpret the intention of the *Didache*, quite evidently applied the prayers of Section x. as well as of Section ix. to the rite of communion, though he modifies the phraseology of Section x. to suit the conditions of his own time. There is so close a parallelism between the prayers of the two Sections<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brightman, *Liturgies*, Vol. I, p. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> *Forsch.*, III, p. 293-297.

<sup>3</sup> Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 235 f., gives an analysis showing their content to be practically identical.

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that it is almost impossible to suppose that one refers to the Eucharist and the other to the Agapé, and one is tempted to infer that we have in fact two variants of one original, both alike applicable to the act of communion. Similarly the phrase in Section xiv., "break bread and give thanks," refers not to two separate acts (Agapé and Eucharist), but to the two essential constitutive elements in the one ritual act of communion.

We conclude then that all three Sections (ix., x., xiv.) alike refer to the rite of communion, still enshrined in the communal meal, and that there is not yet any clear distinction between Eucharist and Agapé. Yet we have a hint of a coming separation. It seems that Sections ix. and x. have in view a private celebration, Section xiv. rather an act of public worship on Sundays and at the duly convened assembly of believers. Possibly, in order to avoid abuses, the public celebration slowly shed the character of a real meal. The two forms may have continued to exist side by side, while the public and more purely symbolical and sacramental form gradually prevailed. The *Didache* thus reflects a period of transition.

(3) In confirmation of our view that the Supper had its origin in the Jewish *Kiddush* meal we have the significant parallelism between the prayers of the *Didache* and the Table Prayers of the Jewish Liturgy, especially the Benediction of the *Kiddush*.<sup>1</sup> In Jewish and Christian liturgy alike there is a blessing, first over the wine and then over the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 45.

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loaf, followed by a more general prayer for all those blessings both material and spiritual which are in the gift of God. Where the Jewish liturgy prays for Jerusalem and the coming of Messiah the prayer of the *Didache* is for the Church on earth and her reunion in the Kingdom prepared for her. The parallel indeed is so complete as to suggest that the Jewish table-liturgy out of which the Supper was born has actually been adapted for Christian use, perhaps because it was felt needful to place some limit to the celebrant's freedom to use his own order : "as for the prophets," runs the instruction at the end of Section x., "permit them to say what they please by way of benediction"—an exceptional licence for exceptional men.

(4) Incidental to the parallelism just noted we find that as in the Jewish liturgy so in the *Didache* prayers the blessing of the cup precedes that of the loaf. And the significance of the cup is still clearly Messianic : "We give thanks to Thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant." Of the two cups mentioned in Luke's account of the Last Supper both in order (as preceding the loaf) and in significance (as being eschatological rather than sacrificial) the cup of the *Didache* corresponds to the first. But in view of the preponderating evidence for the order bread, cup, it is doubtful whether much weight should be put on the *Didache* as a witness for the reverse order at the close of the first century. Indeed even in the same Section of the *Didache* the usual order is encountered : "Let no man eat or drink of your Eucharist but those

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baptized into the Lord's name." Nevertheless, in view of what has been said about the preservation of primitive traits in the *Didache*, it is possible that we have here traces of the survival of the original order—cup, bread.

(5) With regard to the motive for celebrating the Supper, the prayers of the *Didache* give no indication that the observance was conceived to be in obedience to an order of Christ Who had Himself instituted a model for His followers' imitation. Still less is there any hint that the worshippers thought themselves to be commemorating Christ's death or partaking of His body and blood. These ideas, absent from the *Didache*, are significantly introduced in the recension contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, where the two prayers of the *Didache* over the cup and the loaf respectively are merged into one long prayer, containing a thanksgiving for the salvation wrought by the Incarnation and Passion, and closing with praise for the precious body and blood of Jesus Christ, "of which we consummate these antitypes," proclaiming His death in obedience to His command. The significance lies in the need for this addition: in the *Didache* itself the idea of an Institution by Jesus, a commemoration of His death, and a mystic relation between bread and wine and His body and blood—all this is conspicuous by its absence. The symbolism is still rather that of the unity of Christian with Christian in the common brotherhood of believers. The key to the thought is in the words (Section ix.): "As this broken bread was scattered upon the hills and was

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gathered together to become one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the borders of the earth into Thy Kingdom."

(6) Finally, with reference to what has been said about the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist, the following words in Section xiv. might seem to suggest that the author of the *Didache* regards the Eucharist as in some sense a sacrifice : "Everyone who is at variance with his neighbour, let him not join your company, until they be reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the saying of the Lord : 'In every place and time offer Me pure sacrifice ; for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and My Name is wonderful among the nations.'" The allusion to Jesus' words as recorded in Matt. v. 23-24 and the quotation from Malachi i. 11 and 14 suggest that the Eucharist is regarded as parallel to the temple rites and in this sense may be considered a "sacrifice," both alike being expressive of the worshippers' Thanksgiving, a "sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15). But we notice that it is the purity of the worshippers which makes the sacrifice pure, and not *vice versa*, which disproves the idea that the Eucharist is here viewed as a sacrifice which in itself is effectual for the propitiation of sins. In any case the emphasis here is on the necessity for reconciliation, and the idea of sacrifice appears to be introduced only because Jesus Himself had so linked together the ideas of reconciliation and worthy sacrifice (Matt. v. 23-24). It is extremely doubtful whether there is present any

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idea that the elements themselves are offered as a propitiatory oblation to God. Indeed this sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist, which later becomes prominent, is nowhere stressed within the limits of the literature which we are considering. Even in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where some have thought to trace it, it is nowhere clearly apparent. In x. 29, "the blood of the covenant" certainly has reference not to the Eucharist but to the writer's central conception of Christ's sacrifice of Himself; while in xiii. 10 the allusion in "altar" is also rather to that same sacrifice, and the only possible reference to the Eucharist is in the idea that it is not by taking part in any meal that Christians become partakers in the benefits of the sacrifice of Calvary.

In conclusion it may be said that the closest parallel exists between the Eucharist of the *Didache* and the "breaking of bread" at Jerusalem and in the earliest Christian communities, and we may allow light to fall from the former on the latter. At both we have a real meal, apparently not consciously related to the Last Supper nor to the commemoration of Jesus' death. At both thanks is given to God, after the fashion of the Jewish Table-worship, for spiritual as well as for material nourishment. But the presence in the *Didache* of prayers for "life," "knowledge," "the unity of the Church," and of other features significant of a growing church-consciousness, seems to presuppose in the author's milieu the dissemination of Pauline and Johannine conceptions, or at least the presence in germ of ideas

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which were more fully developed by Paul and John. In form still a simple "breaking of bread," in content the Supper of the *Didache* is becoming a true Eucharist, and can only be understood in the light of Paul's own doctrine, to which we now pass.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Eucharistic Doctrine of St. Paul

PAUL has commonly been charged with “paganising” the pure Gospel of Jesus, and nowhere do his accusers more readily find evidence against him than in his sacramental teaching. Thus, e.g. Oscar Holtzmann asserts that by his conception of the Eucharist Paul has introduced into Christianity *Ein Stück Heidentum*,<sup>1</sup> while Dean Inge writes<sup>2</sup> that “St. Paul, who was ready to fight to the death against the Judaising of Christianity, was ready to take the first step, and a long one, towards the paganising of it.” On the other hand Anrich sums up his notable discussion<sup>3</sup> in the conclusion that Pauline Christianity, even Pauline sacramentalism, is “an original creation of the Christian spirit on the basis of genuine Judaism.” The task we set ourselves will be to endeavour to hold the balance between these two extreme opinions :

Two preliminary conclusions require to be noted :

(a) We have already<sup>4</sup> seen reason to suppose that a common tradition underlies both Paul’s and

<sup>1</sup> O. Holtzmann, in *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1904, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Outspoken Essays*, Vol. I, “St. Paul.”

<sup>3</sup> *Das antike Mysterienwesen in seinem Einfluss auf das Christentum*.

<sup>4</sup> p. 53.

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Luke's account of the Last Supper, and that it is probably to this tradition that Paul refers in the words, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (1 Cor. xi. 23). Such a *tradition*—running back ultimately to the Master Himself—we consider to be what Paul is claiming for his authority, rather than a direct revelation (possibly on the Damascus Road, as suggested by Lietzmann), or an auto-suggestion (as argued by Loisy and Bousset). Nothing could be farther from the truth than Loisy's statement<sup>1</sup> that "the manner in which Paul introduces the narrative of the Lord's Supper gives us to understand that this narrative is personal to him, and borrows nothing from the tradition of the Galilean Apostles." Paul undoubtedly believed that his teaching on the Eucharist was in line with orthodox church tradition, and that the celebration ultimately rested on an express institution by Christ.

(b) There is nothing to indicate that by Paul the Last Supper is regarded as the actual Passover meal and the Lord's Supper as a "Christian Passover." In the ritual as narrated by him the only clear parallel with the paschal ritual is the dispensing of the cup "after supper." On the other hand, when Paul seeks an Old Testament type for the Eucharist, he finds it not in the Passover, but in the distribution of the manna in the desert (1 Cor. x. 3). If a counter argument be drawn from the imagery of 1 Cor. v. 6-8, especially the words "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," the reply is that the

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911, p. 54.

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sacrifice here in question is the sacrifice of Calvary, and that there is no allusion to the Supper, as if to represent it as a Christian Passover. Taking as his point of departure the thought of leaven as the symbol of sin, as does Jesus Himself in Mark viii. 15, Paul bids his readers keep their whole Christian life, here pictured as a “feast,” pure from all corrupting influence, remembering by how great a sacrifice they have been redeemed by Christ upon the Cross. We recollect too that according to the correct reckoning<sup>1</sup> Jesus was crucified on the very day when the paschal lambs were being slain, so that Paul might speak of Him as the Christians’ own paschal lamb, without in any way implying that the Last Supper was a Passover or the Eucharist the Christian substitute for the Jewish feast. At the same time it may be admitted that Paul’s language here may readily have added impetus to the tendency already under way, as is seen in the Synoptic Gospels, to identify the Last Supper with the Passover meal. The real importance of the above interpretation of the phrase, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,” is that it removes the only basis for the claim that Paul regards the Eucharist as a sacrifice. He regarded Jesus’ death as a sacrifice; he closely related the Eucharist to that death; but significantly, when so relating the two, he does not speak either of the death, or of the rite which proclaims it, as a sacrifice. The Eucharist for Paul is not a renewed sacrifice, but the memorial of a by-gone sacrifice; it commemorates the death of Christ, but it does not re-enact it by a

<sup>1</sup> See p. 38.

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magical identification of Christ's actual body with the consecrated bread and wine.

We pass to a consideration of the salient passages normative of Pauline doctrine.

*1 Corinthians x. 1-14.* Let us place the passage in its context. In reply evidently to a request for guidance Paul is dealing with the question of participation in heathen sacrificial feasts, and admonishes the "strong" against wounding the consciences of their "weak" brethren in the matter of eating sacrificial meat. Nay more, let them beware lest they unwittingly fall themselves into unforgivable sin. The key to the passage is verse 12: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Let not professing Christians presume upon their Christian standing as if thereby they were safeguarded from sin and its consequences. Rather than fall through too great presumption let them flee any suggestion of countenancing idolatry.

By way of illustration Paul cites the example of the Israelites in the desert, using as a type of the Christian sacrament what may be called the "desert sacrament"—the gift of the manna and of the water from the rock—just as the passage of the sea is used as a type of baptism. He reminds his readers that the chosen people, in spite of the extraordinary tokens of God's favour manifested in their deliverance from Egypt, even although they received these gifts of God's grace—"spiritual meat" and "spiritual drink"—yet fell into idolatry and perished for their sin. Will partakers of the Christian sacraments be in any better case if they likewise

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fall? In God's means of grace there is no infallible safeguard from sin. The enjoyment of a high privilege does not guarantee acceptance with God. From the passage two points emerge:

(a) The "desert sacrament" being used as a type of the Christian Sacrament we may presumably apply to the latter the definitions used by Paul of the former—"spiritual meat" and "spiritual drink." Does this give us any guide as to Paul's conception of the nature of the Sacrament? Is the word "spiritual" to be applied merely to the origin of the "meat" and the "drink" or also to their inherent nature and effect? The latter would appear to be the correct interpretation. The nature of the Sacrament is such that in the realm of the "spiritual," in certain directions and under certain conditions, participation therein may be expected to have a definite result. For the whole point of the comparison is that if the Israelites were tempted to presume on the protective *effect* of their "desert sacrament" *a fortiori* might Christians be tempted to do so on theirs. In other words the Sacrament is for Paul in some sense *effective*. Yet, and this is the important point, the effect is strictly governed by moral conditions. Otherwise the whole force of Paul's argument would be lost, for its very purpose is to prove that divine grace, however effective a spiritual armour it may be, yet affords no absolute guarantee against a subsequent fatal lapse. To say that for Paul the Sacrament is "effective" is not to ascribe any magical effect to the mere partaking of the elements. Paul's conception of the *opus*

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*operatum* in the Sacrament is by no means so prosaic. But further consideration of Paul's view as to the objective and material efficacy of the rite *per se* must meantime be postponed.<sup>1</sup>

(b) Yet this at least the present passage proves, that for Paul the "effect" of the Sacrament is strictly limited and conditioned. We note how in verses 1-4 the word *all* is emphatically repeated. *All* partook of the "desert-sacrament," and yet even so there were many who perished under God's displeasure. Similarly Christians, *all* of whom may be presumed to partake of the Sacrament, are not merely *ex opere operato* and irrespective of moral conditions guaranteed God's favour. In the Sacraments as a means of grace there is no infallible safeguard against moral shipwreck. There will always be a proportion even of covenanted believers who are in danger out of sheer presumption and self-confidence of falling from grace.

Nevertheless Paul's insistence upon such a warning suggests that he is deliberately contradicting a contrary idea prevalent at Corinth, an anti-nomian gnosticism which held that the participant in the Christian Mystery had risen above the possibility of sin. Such an "enlightened" school would argue that, even admitting the possible evil influence on others of participation in heathen feasts, the Christian was safe because by partaking of the consecrated elements he had *ipso facto* gained the protection of a higher power. The fact that in opposition to such views Paul is constrained to use

<sup>1</sup> See p. 193 ff.

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arguments so artificial as those in the opening verses of I Cor. x. suggests that magical conceptions of the sacraments, both heathen and Christian, were more prevalent in Corinth than characteristic of Paul's own teaching, so that in addressing Corinthian readers we may expect to find the Apostle sometimes moving among categories which are rather his readers' than his own. Whatever be true of Paul himself it is almost certainly true of many of his Corinthian converts that they "accepted Christianity as a Mystery-Religion, which really could do what the other Mystery-Religions pretended to do." And it must be acknowledged that there is a good deal of force in Lake's further remark that "it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of realising that, if we want to discover the central points of early Christian doctrine, we must look not at those to which St. Paul devotes pages of argument, but at those which he treats as the premises accepted equally by all Christians."<sup>1</sup>

We pass to I Cor. x. 15 ff. Following the warning of the immediately preceding verses Paul addresses an appeal to his readers' good sense: "I speak," he says, "as to reasonable men." The setting of the passage has already been considered<sup>2</sup> and an attempt made to trace the procedure indicated by Paul's words. Our interest is now the doctrine underlying the words. The chief problem is the content of the word "communion." The fact that the Corinthians did not think it inadmissible to

<sup>1</sup> Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> P. 139.

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frequent both the Christian and pagan feasts suggests that they at least regarded the religious blessing offered at both as virtually the same, that is some kind of “life” or “immortality” secured by “communion” with the deity. Even Paul himself by setting the two in a sort of parallelism (18 ff.) shows himself aware of the resemblance between the heathen meals and the Christian Supper.

The three expressions, “communion (*kouvwvia*) of the body and of the blood of Christ,” “partakers (*kouvwvoi*) of the altars,” “partakers of (or with) demons,” must therefore be explained consistently the one with the other. Taking the last expression first we are pointed to the crude idea of “eating the god” and thereby entering into “communion” with him. Thus Lake again writes: “It is plain that the only conclusion we can draw is that the Corinthians regarded the Eucharist as food and drink, by eating which they enjoyed communion, or participation, in the life of Jesus, as a Spirit; or, to express it differently, by it they became *ēvθεοι*, *ēv χριστῷ*, just as the participants in the Eleusinian Mysteries believed that they became *ēvθεοι*, by means of a meal in which they partook, in some mysterious manner, of the body of Dionysus.”<sup>1</sup> But to ascribe such notions to Paul’s raw converts is by no means to prove that the Apostle himself shared them. In any case the idea of “eating the god” in its crudest form has already been discussed and eliminated as a possible factor in the development of Eucharistic doctrine.<sup>2</sup> As a slight refinement of

<sup>1</sup> Lake, *op. cit.*, p. 213 f.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 28 ff.

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this we are offered the explanation that “it was a wide-spread belief that evil spirits could find their way into the human body and into the soul through the medium of food dedicated to them,”<sup>1</sup> and a well-known passage is quoted from Porphyrius<sup>2</sup> in which he says of demons that “while we are at food they approach and settle on our bodies . . . and delight especially in blood.”

But even if it be admitted that such notions might be familiar to Paul’s Corinthians converts, if not to the Apostle himself, and that they supply a possible explanation of the phrase *κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων*, “partakers of demons,” it is obviously impossible that Paul can have associated any such idea with participation in the temple sacrifices. Such ideas are quite foreign to Jewish thought, and provide no clue at all to the interpretation of the second of our three parallel phrases, “*κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου*,” “partakers of the altar.” To “partake of the altar” simply means that the Jewish priest by eating the consecrated sacrifice confessed himself a worshipper of the Jewish God, identified himself with that God, and became a “partaker” of His holiness. The priests, as Philo puts it,<sup>3</sup> are “sharers of the altar and table mates” . . . “sharers in the offering made to God in thanksgiving” (eucharist).

The phrases *κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων* (translated now “partakers with demons”) and *μετέχειν τραπέζης*

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> Preserved in Eusebius, *Præpar. Evang.*, iv. 23, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *De Special. Legibus*, i. 221.

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*δαιμονίων*, “partake of the table of demons,” are much more suitably explained by the idea already suggested in our discussion of the meaning of the term “Lord’s Supper,” that any one who is present at a sacrificial meal may be presumed to recognise the God in whose honour it is held, and to enter into a table “fellowship” (*κοινωνία*) with the deity who is looked on as the host. We have a most instructive parallel from the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones*<sup>1</sup> where it is said that he who honours “those whom the Pagans call gods, or tastes meat sacrificed to them” thereby becomes “a guest of demons” and “has communion with that demon whose aspect he has fashioned in his mind, whether from fear or love.” As J. Réville<sup>2</sup> well remarks concerning the passage under discussion: “The *κοινωνία τῶν δαιμονίων* . . . does not mean the absorption of the flesh of demons any more than the *κοινωνία τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου* means the absorption of the altar. . . . In the one and the other alternative there is involved the solidarity attested by the religious meal, on the one hand with the demons, on the other with the blood and body of Christ.”

Yet it is hardly sufficient to say that the “communion” of which Paul speaks is to be understood as nothing more than a table-fellowship, the Master being thought of as the Host. Surely he has also in view a real union whereby the Lord Himself enters into the soul of the communicant. But in what

<sup>1</sup> ii. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions*, p. 273.

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sense? By crediting Paul with such a conception are we in fact subscribing to "the notion that Paul believes in the magical communication of the glorified body of Christ to the worshipper through the medium of the bread and the wine"?<sup>1</sup>

Let us look at verse 16 more closely: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?" Logically the meaning can only be that the cup and the loaf are the *means of entering into* a communion. Just how, we shall discuss later. Meanwhile we note that it is a question of a communion not "of Christ" but "of the blood" and "of the body" of Christ. Why so, if Paul does not consider that the relation of the two elements to the body and the blood respectively is in some sense "realistic"?<sup>2</sup>

A second question is this: What is the force of the genitive case, "a communion *of* the blood . . . *of* the body of Christ?" Does it express that *with* which communion is established? Or do the words in the genitive case serve rather to define the communion itself? That is, can the meaning be this: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the means of entering into a fellowship *defined by* the blood of Christ?" Thus Dr. Anderson Scott:<sup>2</sup> "The principle is this, that by participating with or partaking of what Otto would have us call 'numinous' objects men are brought into a group or comradeship or partnership or

<sup>1</sup> Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> *Christianity According to St. Paul*, p. 183 f.

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fellowship which involves a permanent relation to the numinous object or to the person who may be thought to be represented by it.” The *kouvwia* would thus be not fellowship *with* Christ, but the common fellowship of believers defined by and experienced in a certain relation to the blood of Christ. It is “a partnership or fellowship which has its character defined by the Body and by the Blood of Christ. . . . What they partake of is the Loaf and the Cup, and the effect is to bring them into a certain relation with one another, and so to constitute a Sacred Society or Fellowship, or alternatively to confirm the self-consciousness of such a Society.”<sup>1</sup> This is at first sight attractive, and would be still more so if it were possible to interpret the word “body” throughout the whole passage as meaning the Church, the “mystical body” of Christ. But in view of the improbability of this interpretation<sup>2</sup> the alternative explanation is to be preferred according to which the *kouvwia* here in question is a communion not of believer with believer, defined by a common relation to Christ, but of the believer *with* Christ Himself under the symbols of His body and blood.

Thirdly, what is the significance of defining such “communion” not as “communion with Christ” but as “communion with the blood and body of Christ”? And why does Paul use here, as in 1 Cor. xi. 24f., the words *σῶμα* and *άιμα* (*σῶμα* being strictly speaking inclusive of *άιμα*) rather

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 169.

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than the more natural correlatives  $\sigma\acute{a}\rho\xi$  and  $a\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha$ , as is indeed the usage of the writer of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup> If the phraseology of Chapter xi. is indeed part of the “tradition” received by Paul, it would be permissible to conclude that here also the Apostle is employing the word  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  because it was the word in conventional use at the time. There is more than a hint of rhythm in Paul’s words, which suggests that he may be quoting a liturgical fragment. But any such argument is precarious, and therefore some critics have concluded that the word  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  is used here not of Christ’s actual body but as elsewhere (Rom. xii. 5, I Cor. xii. 13, 27, etc.) of His mystical body, and that Paul is speaking simply of the incorporation of worshippers into that Church which is the “body” of Christ. By the partaking of the Sacrament the believer’s membership in the Church is sealed. At first sight this interpretation would seem to be strongly supported by the following verse (17) : “For many as we are, we are one loaf, one body, since we all partake of the one loaf.” Here the “body” quite clearly refers to the church, and the meaning is that by the partaking of the bread by the many members the unity of the Church is realised. The verse will then be an exact parallel to the striking passage already quoted from the *Didache* : “As this broken bread was scattered upon the hills and was gathered together to become one, so may Thy Church be gathered together from the borders of the earth into Thy Kingdom.” *A priori* an interpretation which will give to “body” in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 233.

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verse 16 the same meaning as in verse 17 is undoubtedly attractive.

But this interpretation wholly breaks down before the obvious parallelism between the first and the second halves of verse 16. If the "blood" in 16a be the actual blood of Christ, then the "body" of 16b must surely be His physical and material body (as e.g. in Rom. vii. 4, 1 Cor. xi. 24), "body" and "blood" being two correlative terms together expressive of Christ's sacrificed humanity. In order to retain the meaning "mystical body" in 16b, without violating the parallelism with 16a, Réville would suppose that by "blood" there is represented the dying Christ who in Himself realises the unity of the Body, the Church, just as the blood realises the unity of the physical body. But when thus representing Christ as the principle of the Church's unity Paul always speaks of Him not as the "blood" but as the "head" of the "body" which is the Church, whereas "blood" in the Pauline Epistles is always the blood shed on the Cross. Moreover this whole idea of the unity of the Church as sealed by the Sacrament, which it is proposed to introduce into verse 16, belongs to quite a different order of ideas from those with which we are dealing—communion with demons and with the altar.

We may suppose then that verse 17 with its use of "body" in the sense of the Church is a parenthesis, if not actually an interpolation,<sup>1</sup> in which the traditional conception of the body of Christ set

<sup>1</sup> As suggested by e.g. Schmiedel, *Hand-Commentar zum Neuen Testament*, II, i, p. 151.

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forth in the Supper (v. 16) has recalled to Paul, possibly by a purely verbal association, his own characteristic mystical conception of the "body" of Christ in the sense of the Church. We shall have cause to note a similar double use of the word "body" in I Cor. xi., where in verses 24 and 27 it means Christ's actual body, while in verse 29 it may well mean the Church. "The thought of Paul wavers between the natural body of Jesus delivered to death just as the bread is broken, and His immortal body, which is the human aspect of His being, now imperishable. The two make but one in perspective; it is the same body which underwent death for man, and which continues to exist for them in order that they may be admitted into it. For, between this immortal, spiritual, heavenly body and the mystical body of Christ there is truly no separation, no absolute distinction, but rather substantial identity."<sup>1</sup>

We conclude therefore that by "the communion of the body and the blood of Christ" is meant not the sealing of the believer's fellowship in the Church, but "communion" with Christ Himself. Why then is this communion particularised as the communion of His body and His blood? It is hardly enough to say with, e.g., Otto Pfleiderer<sup>2</sup> that these terms merely figure the whole life of Christ, presumably both the life of the historical Jesus and of the glorified Christ. Much less can we agree with Weinel<sup>3</sup> that "the conception is not merely of a

<sup>1</sup> Loisy, in *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911, p. 55 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Urchristentum*, I, p. 298.

<sup>3</sup> *Biblische Theologie d. Neuen Testaments*, p. 325.

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spiritual partaking of Christ, but somehow of His glorified corporeality.” For Paul flesh and blood have no place in the realm of the Spirit (1 Cor. xv. 50), and it is almost inconceivable that he should have thus crudely conceived of communion with the “glorified” Christ. His meaning can only be that by partaking of the cup and the loaf the believer enters into communion with the historic Jesus Christ, and particularly with Him in His redeeming death. For such is the significance of the emphasis on the body and the blood : “As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord’s death.” That is to say, under the bread and the wine there is figured not the flesh and blood of Christ merely as flesh and blood, but rather the whole human personality of Jesus as slain on the Cross ; so that communion with the body and blood of Christ means communion with Jesus Christ as crucified and all that, according to Paul’s doctrine elsewhere, such communion with the crucified Lord, such “crucifixion with Christ,” involves.

Hence perhaps we have the reason why Paul, unlike John, never actually speaks of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, but associates these solemn actions only with the bread and the cup ; and also, it may be, why he is less careful than John in his choice of words, using  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  for “body” in a context where  $\sigma\acute{a}\rho\xi$  and  $a\hat{i}\mu\alpha$  would be necessary if the intention were to stress an exact symbolical parallelism between the bread-body and the cup-blood. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that in Paul’s writings there is no such

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idea as that of an eating and drinking of the body and the blood of Christ, and that, as Schweitzer has well remarked, “when Dieterich gives it as the Apostle’s view that ‘Christ is eaten and drunk by the believers and is thereby in them,’ and adds that nothing further need be said about the matter, what he has done is, instead of taking Paul’s words as they stand, to interpret Paul through John—and through a misunderstanding of John at that.”<sup>1</sup> Paul no doubt assumes that a certain relationship subsists between the elements and the body and the blood in virtue of which the former “are” the latter, and also that by partaking of these elements a communion with the body and the blood is maintained. But how far he has a “realist” conception of this relation, and a strictly “sacramental” conception of the manner in which the elements are instrumental in effecting the communion, can be judged only when we have surveyed all the evidence.

We pass therefore to 1 Corinthians, xi. 20-34, which is the most important of all New Testament passages dealing with the Eucharist, and has already been fully discussed so far as it bears both upon an Institution by Jesus Himself and upon the liturgical practice of the Pauline Churches. We revert to it as a locus for Pauline sacramental doctrine.

(1) The passage is firstly important as showing that in Paul’s view the act of communion on the part of the believer is a reproduction of the fellowship of the Last Supper, and that its primary object is the commemoration of the dying and returning

<sup>1</sup> *Paul and His Interpreters*, p. 198.

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Christ. The Apostle's rebuke of Corinthian disorders has its sting in his invocation by way of contrast of the example set by Jesus at the Last Supper. The true and worthy Christian communion, the "Lord's Supper" fit so to be called, is a repetition of the Master's own Last Communion with His disciples. From this it follows that for Paul the Supper has become first and foremost a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice and a pledge of His return: "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death, till He come."

As a clue to the distinctively Pauline view of the Supper the significant words are these: "This do—*eis τὴν ἐμην ἀνάμνησιν.*" The Authorised Version rendering "in remembrance of Me" is quite inadequate and represents *μνήμη* not *ἀνάμνησις* which is the act of recollection. The force of the Greek words is therefore not merely "to celebrate My memory," but "with a view to recalling Me." The repetition of the sacred rite after the very manner of the Master Himself at the Last Supper should so vividly recall Him to mind that He is felt to be actually present. As Dr. Anderson Scott well puts it,<sup>1</sup> "That really was the primary purpose and function of the rite. . . . It was this that gave numinous significance to the Loaf and the Wine by means of which His followers re-constituted the scene which had been so familiar in the days of His flesh." And so, when Paul adds "you proclaim the Lord's death till He come," he means something far deeper than just that public witness is being borne

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 191 f.

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to the fact that Christ died. It is not the attestation of a historical fact that is in question but the truth that in this act of communion the assembled believers are proclaiming, as if by a sermon in action, that for them the continual presence of the Lord who dies for them has become, by the use of the elements according to His own instruction, not merely a matter of faith but a fact of experience, and will continue to be such a fact of experience to all Christians "till He come." This is the true New Testament doctrine of the Real Presence.

Having supplied this background to Paul's doctrine we pass on to consider,

(2) the words spoken over the loaf: "This is My body", that is the dying body of the historical Jesus. Once again some interpreters urge the alternative meaning "this represents My mystical body, the Church"; but this seems ruled out both by the parallelism with "blood" in the following verse (as in x. 16) and also by the addition of the words "for you." The word *εστιν*, "is," is perhaps best translated with Moffatt "this *means* My body broken for you." It implies here a very close affinity which yet falls short of complete identity. While the simple idea expressed by "represents," "symbolises," hardly perhaps gives the word its full content, "means" completes it by adding the idea of *purpose*. It implies that in some sense (how, we shall endeavour to discover later) the loaf has in Paul's view the same spiritual effect as would the body itself: it brings the worshipper into intimate relation with the dying Christ. Thus the words "this is My body" are no

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mere figure of speech, but are, as Wendt puts it, “a declaration of value,” and the word “is” denotes here as elsewhere in the New Testament “the significance which a person or thing or transaction has as a ‘good,’ or as a means of obtaining good, or as a cause of important effects.”<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious how far Paul’s conception of such “significance” or “value” has advanced beyond the meaning for the Primitive Church of the simple act of the breaking of bread. We have seen reason to believe that in the latter the commemoration of the *death* of Christ had no place: for Paul it was the chief motive of the celebration. The reasons which may well have led to this new emphasis have already been discussed.<sup>2</sup> As soon as Christian faith began to centre more definitely upon Christ’s death the “breaking of bread,” at first simply a fraternal meal, would become dominated more and more by the recollection of that death. We have already noted<sup>3</sup> that this evolution may well have begun before Paul, for according to the Apostle himself he had received already a tradition in which the Supper was spoken of as an institution for the commemoration of Jesus’ death; but we must remember that Paul was no strictly accurate historian and may have reported the tradition not exactly as he received it but as coloured by his own more fully developed doctrine.

As for his interpretation of the significance of the death commemorated in the Supper, we have it crystallised in the phrase  $\tauὸν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν$  “for you,”

<sup>1</sup> Wendt, *The Teaching of Jesus*, ii., p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> P. 99.

<sup>3</sup> P. 100 f.

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“on your behalf,” the whole content of which has already been fully discussed.<sup>1</sup> Again we remind ourselves that the doctrine of Atonement implied in the words may quite probably be traced back beyond Paul, if not to Jesus Himself. As Dr. Rashdall well notes,<sup>2</sup> Paul’s words in 1 Cor. xv. 3 indicate that “the belief that in some sense Christ died for sin, in order that sin might be forgiven and removed, was . . . quite certainly part of what St. Paul received. It was already an article of the Church’s traditional creed when the Apostle of the Gentiles was baptized into it.” It may be less certain whether that tradition was due to Jesus’ own teaching or rather “resulted from the reflection of the Church in the interval which elapsed between the Crucifixion and St. Paul’s conversion,” as Dr. Rashdall believes.<sup>3</sup> But for Paul at any rate, whether or no for Jesus Himself, the broken bread means the body of Jesus given over to that death which has become a medium of blessing for His followers, and the partaking of it in faith effects what that death was purposed to effect. The injunction to “take, eat” (if we admit it to the text) emphasises the necessity of appropriating the promised blessing. Again we ask, is there any evidence of anything magical or “realistic” in Paul’s conception of the benefit received? The answer must wait until our summary in the following chapter.

(3) The pronouncement over the cup has likewise already been fully discussed.<sup>4</sup> “This cup

<sup>1</sup> P. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 75 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> P. 97 ff.

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means the new covenant in My blood" or "ratified by My blood" (Moffatt). The words, as Goguel remarks,<sup>1</sup> are a synthesis of two ideas: "This cup means the blood shed for believers," and "the shedding of this blood realises a new covenant." Again the idea is that the new relation to God purposed by the dying Christ is appropriated through the believing partaking of the wine which "means" His blood.

The "covenant" idea has already been discussed<sup>2</sup> and shown to be quite consistent with Jesus' own thought. The problem, we saw, is the emergence in Paul's account of a *covenant cup*. In the primitive "breaking of bread" the cup was apparently not a constant feature, or at any rate the greater emphasis was upon the bread. As the Supper came to be regarded more and more as a reproduction of the Last Supper, the *regular* use of the cup would spontaneously establish itself. But the cup we have seen reason to suppose to be originally the "eschatological cup" with a symbolical intention disparate from that of the bread. For Paul the cup has become the exact counterpart of the bread, and the second ritual act has the same doctrinal content as the first—the commemoration of the sacrificial death and the appropriation of its benefits—though the eschatological hope is preserved in the words "till I come." This assimilation may well have taken place under Pauline influence, and may be due to his desire more and more to magnify the Cross. But again it must be insisted that the *covenant idea*

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> P. 64 f.

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in itself is not characteristically Pauline and may have been anterior to him and inherited as part of his tradition. The idea of *redemption* rather than that of a sacrificial covenant, which is characteristic of the writer to the Hebrews, is the kernel of Paul's theology of salvation. No doubt the Christian Gospel is for him a *new* covenant established by Christ's death as opposed to the *old* covenant of the Law (2 Cor. iii. 6 ff.). But "that he retains in this connection the covenant idea is a proof of his attachment to the common tradition ; for had he been freely inventing he certainly would not have presented Christ's blood in the light of covenant blood. Such a conception is hardly in the line of his theology."<sup>1</sup> "It is therefore," concludes Dr. Kennedy,<sup>2</sup> "wholly arbitrary to challenge the allusion to the covenant as an addition due to Paul."

(4) Finally, the admonitions which follow Paul's account of the Last Supper are particularly suggestive as clues to his sacramental doctrine. "Let a man examine himself, test himself," says Paul, "and be sure that he realises the true character and the full significance of the sacred rite, and let him eat in this spirit of preparedness and understanding ; for failure to do so will result in this sacramental worship proving not to his advantage but to his positive loss" (verses 17, 29 f.). These ill consequences result for the man who eats or drinks "*unworthily*" (*ἀναξίως*). What is the force of this word ? It may be deduced from a succession of phrases in the context descriptive

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions*, p. 275.

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of the abuses which the Apostle is attacking ; the ideas underlying these phrases are as follows : (a) "To show disrespect to the Church of God" (verse 22), (b) "To put the poor to shame" (verse 22), (c) a failure to "discern the body," that is, to communicate "without a proper sense of the Body" (verse 29, Moffatt), (d) by implication from verse 31 a failure to "discern ourselves," that is "to judge our own lives truly" (Moffatt), to see oneself as but one in a company of believers and therefore to refrain from using the feast for mere self-gratification, (e) by implication from verse 33 a failure to "wait for one another."

The whole context thus shows that the word "unworthily" means "without a worthy spirit of brotherhood towards all one's fellow-worshippers." A breach of love between the worshippers mars alike the efficacy of the worship towards the believer and its value before God. It is just this "unworthy" attitude of the rich towards the poor which, says Paul, has made the Supper of no effect, no true Supper at all (verse 20) ; it is just this that prompts him to write thus sternly to his friends. To partake of the Supper in such a spirit is to celebrate it in a temper alien from its meaning and purpose (the force of *ἀναξίως*). "You could not," says Paul, "behave as you do if you remembered that the very purpose of the rite is to proclaim the death of One Who by dying sealed a covenant relation of love between men as well as one of faith and love between God and man."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Anderson Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

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This “unworthy” temper is more explicitly defined in the phrase “not discerning the body” ( $\muὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα$ , verse 29). The meaning of this phrase is one of the cruces of the passage. The addition  $\tauοῦ κυρίου$  (*the Lord's* body), should certainly be omitted with the best MSS. The word  $\deltaιακρίνειν$  occurs in the New Testament with a large variety of meanings, but here the sense appears to be “to recognise something which might and does escape superficial observation,” to see beneath the surface to the hidden reality below. But what once more is the force of the word “body”? It is usually argued that because  $\sigmaῶμα$  in verses 24 and 27, where in each case it is used alongside of  $αἷμα$ , quite clearly means the actual body of Jesus Himself given to death on our behalf, the meaning in verse 29 must therefore be the same. The sense will then be that the unworthy participant fails to appreciate the truth that the bread and the wine “are” the Lord sanctified for him. He fails to pierce through the symbol to the reality symbolised: “What he misses in the observance is precisely the vital thing —a recognition of Christ’s sacrificial death (cf. I Cor. ii. 1 f.). With all their striving after mystic knowledge and mystic union, the Corinthian Christians failed to discern in the Supper the Lord’s broken body and shed blood.”<sup>1</sup> And so to fail is to be “guilty of the body and the blood” (verse 27) —a phrase which is held to be strictly parallel with that now under discussion.

But the whole context, with its emphasis upon the

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

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necessity for the spirit of Christian brotherhood, suggests that (as previously in x. 17 alongside of x. 16) we have another instance of Paul reverting to his favourite thought of the Church as the “Body” of Christ. Possibly once again the thought is prompted by the purely verbal association. The phrase “not discerning the body” then becomes an exact parallel to the words in verse 22, “show disrespect to the Church of God.” Dr. Moffatt well translates *μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα* “without a proper sense of the Body.” It is this failure to sense that the Church is the Body of Christ which leads a man to “show disrespect to the Church”; and this want of respect for the Church, returning on the vicious circle, shows itself in his unbrotherly and unseemly conduct at the Supper. “By his selfish action the richer brother failed to realise that the sacred meal was a fellowship of believers with Christ and one another. It was the Sacrament of their incorporation in Christ.”<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps in favour of this interpretation that, whereas in verses 24 f. and 27 “blood” is mentioned alongside of “body,” in verse 29 Paul speaks of discerning the “body” only, in spite of the fact that in the immediate context “drinking” is mentioned as well as “eating.”

The punitive consequences of a failure to “discern the body” are also defined in several phrases: (a) “Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (verse 27), (b) “Eats and drinks to his own condemnation” (verse 29), (c) “Many of you are ill and infirm, and a number even dead” (verse 30),

<sup>1</sup> See Hastings, *E.R.E.*, Vol. v., p. 543.

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(d) “Judged” and “chastened by the Lord” (verse 32).

The crucial phrase is the first—*ἐνοχός τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος*—which is alike the key to the understanding of the others and must be viewed in the light that falls from them. The language is condensed and pregnant and means logically “to be liable to such punishment as those merit who sin against the body and the blood”; as Moffatt translates, “Anyone who eats the loaf or drinks the cup of the Lord carelessly will have to answer for a sin against the body and the blood of the Lord.” “The body and the blood” can mean only the body and blood of the Lord Himself sacrificed on the Cross and “proclaimed” in the bread and the cup, and the guilt consists in the failure to discern and duly to honour the mysterious relationship between that bread and that cup on the one hand and the broken body and shed blood on the other hand. By unworthily handling the symbols participants are in fact flouting the divine reality symbolised—nay more than symbolised, for be it said again that for Paul the Lord Himself is really present in the Eucharistic bread and wine. Why should Paul here expressly say “Guilty of sin against *the body and blood*,” and not merely “against the Lord,” unless it be that for him the bread-body and the cup-blood “are” in some sense “really” the Lord, and not merely symbols of His sacrifice?

That Paul holds such a realistic conception of the Sacrament, nay more, that he regards it as a semi-magical rite effecting material results merely *ex opere*

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*operato*, is often argued from the nature of the consequences of an unworthy participation at which he hints. The communicant who eats and drinks unworthily is not merely deprived of the blessings which he would otherwise receive, but actually suffers positive and *physical* ill : “ That is why many of you are ill and infirm, and a number even dead ” (30). Admittedly Paul’s warning that, in case of unworthy use, the elements are not merely ineffectual but have an *evil* effect suggests at first sight that according to the Apostle there is a mysterious objective power *in the elements themselves*. The alternative interpretation, which we have rejected, of the phrase “ discerning the body ” is enlisted in support of this argument. Thus Heitmüller, whose argument is well summarised by Morgan : “ The unworthy partaking, of which the Corinthians were guilty, consisted in this, that they did not recognise the true character of the sacred objects on the table, but treated them as if they had been ordinary bread and wine. And the divinity-charged elements reacted against the profane users by smiting them with sickness and death.”<sup>1</sup> They thus drink “ to their own condemnation ” (verse 29). Heitmüller, with the perverse ingenuity so characteristic of the comparative-religionist, actually seeks a parallel in a Syrian belief that those who ate sardines, which were consecrated to the goddess Atargatis, fell victims to boils and wasting disease !

But for Paul the unworthy partaking of the Sacrament is not merely a reckless use of certain

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 222. Cf. Heitmüller, *Taufe und Abendmahl*, pp. 66 ff.

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magically-charged elements, but an act of sacrilege against the Lord Himself. Like the writer to the Hebrews he would feel that the irreverent communicant had “spurned the Son of God” and “profaned the covenant-blood with which he was sanctified,” and “insulted the Spirit of grace” (Hebrews x. 29; cf. vi. 6). Accordingly, if Paul does in fact draw a connection between irreverence at the table and certain punitive consequences, he would probably argue that the latter are a “judgment” (*κρίμα*, verse 29) sent by God to discipline the guilty. In the following verses they are exhibited as effected not by any “divinity-charged elements,” but by the chastening hand of the Lord Himself: “When we are judged we are chastened by the Lord” (verse 32). The notion that in the elements themselves there resides a magical objective power working *ex opere operato* either for good or ill is contradicted by the general tenor of the whole passage, the main argument of which is that the Supper has not its proper efficacy apart from the state of mind of the celebrants. For have not the Corinthians by their unbrotherly behaviour annulled its very purpose and character? Yet the fact that Paul can speak of positive physical ills following upon abuse of the sacred rite shows how easily the door would open to magical notions of the bestowal and working of sacramental grace. For Paul “the Lord’s Supper had the same judgment force as the Word or the Gospel. And for the same reason. Each of them was calculated to convey so penetrating a sense of the unmerited and redeeming love of

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God that it acted to the dividing asunder of them that were being saved and them that were being lost. And it would appear that Paul believed that illustrations of physical consequences corresponding to such a judgment had fallen within his observation, or at least come to his knowledge. From this it was only a step, and a natural one, though it was one which Paul himself did not take, to transfer to the symbols themselves the qualities of that which they symbolised.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Anderson Scott, *Christianity According to St. Paul*, p. 196 f.

## CHAPTER IX

### The Eucharistic Doctrine of St. Paul *(continued)*

WE are now in a position to summarise our data and draw our inferences with regard to Paul's Eucharistic doctrine.

The contrast between the significance originally attached to the primitive "breaking of bread" and Paul's sacramental doctrine is patent. The "breaking of bread" was primarily a social and fraternal ceremony and no supernatural grace was in any way attributed to the elements which constituted the Supper. For Paul on the other hand the rite has become a sacrament; it has in itself a certain objective value and efficacy, and there is present a conception of the grace bestowed which at least approaches the realist conception. This in itself constitutes a revolution in the whole meaning of the rite.

As for the Supper's meaning and purpose for Paul we have traced three main lines of thought, in part complementary, in part it must be confessed contradictory :

(1) Firstly, there is the characteristically Pauline view that the Supper was instituted by Jesus Himself expressly to commemorate His sacrifice, and that by a worthy observance of the rite we so "recollect" and "recall" the dying Lord that He is truly present

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with His worshipping disciples. This eating and drinking "in memory of Me," this "proclamation of the Lord's death till He come" is for Paul the function *par excellence* of the Supper. It is a view of the Eucharist which first appears in Paul's letters and may be said to be peculiarly his own.

(2) The second conception, which our previous discussion will suggest is not original to Paul but rather part of his inheritance of the traditional view of the Supper, is that the rite expresses the fraternal unity of the Church. The loaf set forth in symbol the truth that "the congregation is the circle of those who stand in fellowship with God and share that fellowship with one another as their highest gift."<sup>1</sup> This thought comes out especially in I Cor. x. 17 and xi. 29, and would appeal instinctively to Paul, one of whose favourite images is that of the incorporation of the believer into that mystic "body" of Christ which is the Church. The loaf sets forth in symbol the Living Fellowship which the Master had established, and by the partaking of it Christians are united the closer one to the other. This is the great thought expressed in the *Didache*: just as the grains of wheat which went to make the bread were once scattered upon the hills, but were now compacted into one loaf, so believers once so divided had been compacted together as the several members of the body of Christ. Yet we note how Paul has given to this traditional conception a new turn which is more strictly sacramental and realist. As M. Goguel says

<sup>1</sup> Lütgert, quoted by Anderson Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

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with some reason : “ By her common repast the Church does not merely express her unity, she realises it. Christians do not eat the same bread because they form one and the same body: they form one and the same body because they eat the same bread. Here appears the sacramental notion.”<sup>1</sup>

(3) Thirdly, there is the idea that by partaking of the sacred elements, the “ spiritual ” meat and drink, the participants enter into direct relation with Christ Himself in His death and are united in a mysterious “ communion ” with Him. This too is an innovation upon the primitive conception. But here too Paul seems quite unconscious that he is innovating, and we must perhaps assume that the road towards this evolution had also been prepared already in the environment in which he worked and wrote.

It is important to determine if we can which of these three conceptions is primary for Paul. The second we hold to be his legacy received from the primitive notion of the Eucharist which readily found a home for itself in his own system. Of the other two conceptions we hold the first to be primary. The commemoration of Christ’s sacrifice is the main theme of the important passage in I Cor. xi. The sentence, “ you proclaim the Lord’s death till He come ” is of particular importance as an index to the Apostle’s thought, since it formed no part of the tradition received by him, but was added by himself. First and foremost for Paul the Supper is a memorial of Christ’s sacrificial death and a means of proclaiming it.

<sup>1</sup> Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

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It may be asked whether this finding can be harmonised with the undoubted presence in I Cor. x. of the idea that the Supper also effects "communion" with the sacrificed and exalted Christ. Is it possible to suppose that Paul is in fact offering two parallel and complementary interpretations of the rite, that for the Apostle it is both a commemoration of Christ's sacrificial death and also a means towards achieving union with Him in His death and resurrection? Some scholars have felt that the contradiction is irreconcilable. Heitmüller for example argues that we have in I Cor. two quite contradictory conceptions of the Supper: in chapter x. it is a "spiritual" meal in which the participants assimilate the personality of the glorified Christ and thus enter into communion with Him; in chapter xi. it is an act of commemoration of the dying Christ. The first conception according to Heitmüller reflects the ideas of the Corinthians, the second is native to Paul himself; and between the two there is a fundamental opposition which cannot be reconciled.<sup>1</sup>

Though we question whether Heitmüller does not drive his logic to extremes, it may be readily admitted that the conception of union with Christ as mediated through an external and material rite is wholly out of harmony with the general trend and colour of the Apostle's thought. Though the idea of a mystic union of believers with their Lord is one of Paul's dominant thoughts, it is worthy of notice that he nowhere else brings it into relation with the Supper; and even here the conception is born out

<sup>1</sup> *Taufe und Abendmahl*, p. 29 f.

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of the stress of his argument as he strives to prove the inconsistency of Christians participating in heathen feasts. As in the parallel case of his argument from the practice of "baptising for the dead" (1 Cor. xv. 29) it would appear that Paul is "consciously digging in a field of thought that is not his own."<sup>1</sup> In other words, while for the Apostle himself the Supper is primarily a commemoration of the death of Christ, the idea of union through the instrumentality of the rite is rather a concession or approximation to the conceptions of his ex-pagan converts. Thus far we may agree with Heitmüller.

Having thus laid bare the primary stratum in Paul's thought we ask, How far may the Apostle be considered to be a sacramentalist? And this in two directions:

(a) Firstly, in his conception of the relation of the symbols to the divine reality symbolised. Has Paul any notion of a "real objective presence" of the Lord in the material elements? Is there any justification for such extreme statements as, e.g. that of Dieterich, who argues that it is beyond question that for Paul, by a process which is "actual" (*faktisch*), "Christ is eaten and drunk by the faithful and is thereby in them"?<sup>2</sup>

Undoubtedly for the Apostle the elements are something more than mere symbol. There is a sense in which they "are" or "mean" the body and the blood of Christ. They have a real objective value and do effect the results which he associates

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> *Mitbräsliturgie*, p. 106.

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with them. They constitute a supernatural gift from the Lord ; they are a "spiritual" food and drink not only in their origin but in their nature. Yet a strictly literalistic interpretation of the words of institution as narrated by Paul is obviously impossible. It would involve us in the absurdity that the cup itself, not the wine in it, is the new covenant. Nor can Paul any more than the Twelve at the Last Supper have understood in any literal sense the bread to be Christ's body. Paul is as far as possible from imagining a crude eating and drinking of the actual body and blood of Christ. As we have seen he does not even use such language, and to attribute any such conception to him is to interpret Paul through a misinterpretation of John, just as any discussion about "re-birth" in relation to Paul's doctrine of Baptism, where Paul's idea is not that of "re-birth" but that of "resurrection" (Rom. vi. 3 f., Col. ii. 12 f.), is a quite illegitimate exposition of Paulinism on the basis of Johannine doctrine. At the Eucharist it is Christ Himself, not His flesh and blood as in the Fourth Gospel (John vi. 53 ff.), to Whom Paul points as the food and drink of the soul. There is no evidence whatever that the Apostle believed in the magical communication of the "body" either of the dying or of the glorified Christ through the medium of the bread and wine. As Schweitzer puts it bluntly but none the less unanswerably : "The difficulty lies in the fact that for Paul the body and blood of the historic Christ no longer exist, and that, on the other hand, while the glorified Christ has indeed a body, it is not a body

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through which blood flows and which is capable of being consumed on earth. To speak of the body and blood of Christ is, from the stand-point of the Apostle's doctrine, an absurdity. He cannot in his doctrine of the Supper bring the historic words into harmony with his Christology, and yet is obliged to do so. The compromise remains for us obscure.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that Paul did think (though we have suggested that the idea is not for him primary) that the act of participation in some way effected "communion" with the Lord. But it is not in the least clear, and we doubt whether Paul ever defined the problem to himself, how he brought this idea into relation with the traditional words of Jesus about the bread and wine "being" His body and blood. As Schweitzer again pertinently asks : "Did the idea arise out of these words, or did he receive it from some other quarter and afterwards make use of it for the interpretation of the historic words ?" Our impression is that Paul himself was not even sufficiently *conscious* of the problem to justify us being at all dogmatic in propounding our solution for it. Sacraments provided no problem to the age, and for the Apostle the only problem raised by the Eucharist was the ethical one. Suffice it then to say that Paul does not teach any doctrine of the "real objective presence," if by that is implied the belief that in partaking the sacramental bread and wine the communicant assimilated the actual body and blood of Christ, and thereby received into himself elements charged with magical potency. If

<sup>1</sup> *Paul and His Interpreters*, p. 199.

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the sacramental be synonymous with the magical, then Paul is no sacramentalist. But there is a sacramentalism which is no mere excrescence of crude superstition but is ethical to the core and has its ground in a genuine religious experience and in the conviction, proved by personal testing, that things seen and temporal can become a seal to faith in things unseen and eternal. Yet it does not necessarily follow that because Paul's sacramentalism is ethical it is therefore entirely free from what to modern minds seems superstition. "It is quite possible for a high standard of ethics to exist in close association with beliefs which are really superstitions, provided they are not known to be superstitions, and are sincerely believed."<sup>1</sup> In view of the care-free attitude of the age towards the, to us, profoundly perplexing metaphysical problems raised by the sacraments, it is not wise *a priori* to lay down dogmatically what is and what is not a possible belief for Paul.

(b) Secondly, is Paul to be pronounced an advanced sacramentalist in his conception of the objective and material efficacy of the rite *per se*? The plain issue on which must turn all discussion of Paul's doctrine is whether for him the rite merely represents the truth of salvation or is also the instrument which effects it. Bluntly put, does Paul believe that the Eucharist is redemptively efficacious *ex opere operato*? Must we agree with Schweitzer who, though avoiding many of the extravagances of investigators obsessed with the

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Bezzant, in *The Modern Churchman*, October, 1926, p. 359.

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phenomena of comparative religion, yet says that Paul has “the most prosaic conception imaginable of the *opus operatum*” in the sacraments?

As has already been remarked, traces of such a realistic conception have been found in Paul’s warning that an unworthy participation does not simply annul the objective effect of the Sacrament, but turns it into evil channels. But such an inference involves a misconception with which we have already dealt. Even if the argument be accepted, it would still remain true that the efficacy of the rite is not unconditional—that is, it does not work purely *ex opere operato*—for the end of the Sacrament is of course, assumed to be redemptive; and worthy participation following upon self-discipline is necessary in order that the supposed magical action of the elements may be directed in a beneficial direction. Without such “faith” it reacts to the injury of the communicant. Nor is there any hint whatever that the elements as such have in Paul’s view any significance or any efficacy apart from the service of fellowship in which they are consumed. The Apostle, unlike some of our modern “Catholics,” would not be guilty of appropriating to the mere material elements the name of “Sacrament” which belongs of right to the service as a whole.

Nevertheless nothing can obviate the impression left upon us that for Paul the Eucharist is not merely symbolical but instrumentally effective. It is a real Sacrament, an efficacious sign. But how, once again he does not explain. It is of course open to anyone,

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if he will, to argue that Paul would have explained this efficacy, in harmony with the ideas of his day, along the lines of an *ex opere operato* working. But in fact he does not so explain it, probably because again he is quite unconscious of the problem, and there are some indications that he would not have so explained it. Paul, just as we do ourselves, had in his own experience found the Sacraments to "work." In the case of his converts he had seen them to be efficacious for the renewal of the spiritual life. But, no more than we, can he explain *how* they work, and unlike ourselves he does not attempt to explain. As Schweitzer has well pointed out, Paul certainly thinks "sacramentally," but in a different and even more mysterious sense than the devotees of the Mysteries. In the Mysteries the rite is simply assumed to effect what it represents ; the result is logical "when once the thought is grasped that the world of appearance and the world of reality stand in mysterious connection with one another." But for Paul the rite effects far more than that which is symbolised : the act of eating and drinking not only effects the receiving of the Lord but also involves a confession of faith in the redemptive efficacy of His death and of the hope of union with Him in the *parousia*. But how is not explained: "The assertions which go beyond this (the bare idea of fellowship through a common partaking) show not the faintest connection with the outward significance of the rite."<sup>1</sup> Paul's sacramentalism is therefore "non-rational," as indeed is the sacramentalism of

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, p. 212 f.

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ninety per cent. of Christians to-day. He has not thought out its implications even for himself. At any rate he has not formulated the problem and its solution sufficiently clearly to incur the charge that he imagines the Sacrament to "work" *ex opere operato*. "The most impenetrable mystery known to us is the interaction, or reciprocal action, of spirit and matter. The effectual working of Sacraments is part of that problem. . . . It is therefore extremely unlikely that the true solution was known to St. Paul. If it was, he has certainly not revealed it to us, and mercifully he refrained from the promulgation of any theories."<sup>1</sup> Yet, though we must acquit the Apostle of consciously harbouring the crude magical notions of the Mystery Religions, we may also gladly acknowledge that "there was something more for Paul and his converts in this sacred meal than an impressive symbolism. The 'acted parable' was amazingly fitted to rouse and invigorate their faith. Thus they were by faith carried past the symbols into what Holtzmann has fitly called 'the sphere of the reconciling grace which rests upon the death of Christ.'"<sup>2</sup>

We are now in a position to face our final question. What place has such a "sacramentalism" in the *tout ensemble* of Paul's doctrinal scheme? The fact that the only definite mention of the Eucharist occurs in two chapters largely given over to polemics arising out of local conditions might suggest that Paul's Eucharistic doctrine is a mere appendage or

<sup>1</sup> Bezzant, in *loc. cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions*, p. 278.

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excrescence growing up under external and alien conditions. But, while admittedly much of the material under discussion consists of *argumenta ad hominem* provoked by specific and perhaps exceptional situations, all that we know of the subsequent development of the Pauline church system, not to mention the fact that Paul definitely ascribes the institution of the Supper to Jesus Himself, warns us of the danger of measuring the importance of a subject by the number of references to it, and contradicts the theory that the Eucharist is for Paul a mere accessory. To quote M. Goguel : " His Eucharistic ideas are not developed by Paul under the influence of accidental circumstances ; they are a constitutive element in his thought."<sup>1</sup>

Yet it is undoubtedly difficult to harmonise Paul's sacramental conceptions with the general tenor of his teaching. The difficulty is that Paul attributes the same results now apparently to the due performance of a sacramental rite, now to a moral attitude of the heart towards God, which we may sum up as " faith "—the two processes having at first sight nothing in common. Alongside a religion of inwardness there appears at times this sacramentalism which is inherently opposed to it. " In St. Paul's writings we have the two forms of religion—the subjective and the objective, the sacramental and the purely spiritual—standing side by side without any attempt at co-ordination. At one time it is faith that produces the Spirit, at another baptism, now union with Christ is through

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 180.

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faith, and now again it is through the Lord's Supper. These two series of conceptions have not as yet been united under any one system. They cannot be harmonised. . . . Paul himself did not feel the problem at all."<sup>1</sup> It will not suffice to say that the Sacrament would for Paul be invalid apart from faith, even if we assume this to be proved ; much less that faith would be invalid apart from the Sacrament—that is that in either case the one is complementary of the other and necessary to its full effectiveness. It remains to explain why sometimes the Apostle so stresses the Sacraments as channels of a grace which far more often he assumes to be received quite apart from any sacramental observance by the exercise of faith alone.

Let us put the problem thus : the supreme end of the Gospel according to Paul is the reconciliation of man to God. This is achieved through the "redemption" of man ( $\alpha\piολύτρωσις$ ), whether this be conceived as redemption from the bondage of the law, the servitude of sin, or the dominion of the cosmic spirit-forces of evil. Such redemption has been effected by Christ, who first makes Himself one with humanity in His subjection to that from which humanity must be redeemed, and then by His death and resurrection rises victorious over it, carrying with Him in His victory such as make themselves one with Him in that death and new life. Redemption is appropriated in so far as the individual believer becomes one with the risen Christ ; it becomes effective in his experience when he is

<sup>1</sup> Weinel, *St. Paul, The Man and His Work*, E.T., p. 120 f.

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“in Christ,” when he is in communion with Him who effects it.

How then is this mystic communion of man with his Redeemer to be realised? Paul gives two answers: primarily through the trust-union, that appropriating response of the believer to the mercy of God offered in Christ which Paul calls “faith.” For faith is “the moral energy of man which going forth to meet the ‘grace’ of God in Jesus Christ establishes a mystical union” with Him.<sup>1</sup> Faith for Paul involves a union of will and moral experience with Christ so complete that Christ’s death and the new life which follows it become part of the believer’s own experience. Like Christ he has died to sin, become dead to the penalties of the law, passed out from under the authority of evil spirit-forces. In a word he is “redeemed.”

Yet elsewhere it is precisely this same union of the redeemed with the Redeemer in His death and risen life which is assumed to be effected by the Sacraments, so that it is hardly an exaggeration to say that “the communion occupies in the organism of the Pauline system exactly the same place as faith.”<sup>2</sup> How then are we to relate these two conceptions of union with Christ? Are they simply two irreconcilable elements in Paul’s system, so that we are forced to admit a certain incoherence in his thought, the faith-union being the characteristic conception of the Apostle himself, the sacramental-union his concession to the cruder ideas of his

<sup>1</sup> Anderson Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

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converts? Or are we to suppose that both alike are conceptions which Paul has made his own, and that the relation between the two is simply one of juxtaposition with no attempt on the part of the Apostle to reduce completely to a unity two sets of ideas which are in truth diverse alike in origin and in character?

It is impossible to give a completely satisfying answer. But this much we may assert. For Paul it is the doctrine of salvation through faith that is primary, and the doctrine of the Sacraments which has been, somewhat imperfectly, accommodated to it. Schweitzer is undoubtedly right when he says that Paul did not invent new sacramental notions and attach them to the sacred rites of primitive Christianity. Rather did he attach his characteristic view of redemption to the rites which he inherited and which were quite possibly already regarded as "sacramental."<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of redemption is primary, and since it is natural to assume some connection between that doctrine and the Sacraments, therefore the Sacraments *must* effect that wherein Paul holds redemption to consist, that is union with Christ: but how they effect it is not explained. In other words Paul seems to attach his mystical doctrine of a redemptive union through faith to rites which had not been specifically designed with reference to it, but which he inherited and endeavoured to accommodate to his system. Thus the two Sacraments, though prominently related to the doctrine of redemption,

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 215, 243.

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are not its be-all and end-all. If the two pillars are removed the building still stands ; for the whole doctrine of communion with Christ rests primarily on the simple conception of faith. "Paulinism is thus a theological system with sacraments, but not a Mystery-religion."

No doubt the fact that Paul allows his doctrine seemingly to be bound up with external ceremonies involves him in a certain duality ; but again the interesting thing is that he appears to be quite unconscious of this duality. He allows faith and the Sacraments to stand side by side as means of salvation. The mystic union realised by faith and that realised by the Sacrament are but two aspects of the same idea. If we asked the Apostle whether the Sacrament needs faith to make it valid, he would almost certainly agree. If we asked him if faith is invalid apart from the Sacrament—we can only answer that he never seems to have proposed the problem to himself ; but if he had done so, it is impossible that he could have assented. Whether or no it be logically true, as Heitmüller asserts, that Paul's views on the Lord's Supper "stand in unreconciled and unreconcilable opposition with the central significance of faith for Pauline Christianity, that is to say with the purely spiritual, personal view of the religious relation which stands in the foreground of Pauline religious life and religious thought," the Apostle himself certainly gives no hint that he was ever conscious of such an opposition between faith and sacrament. "It is probable that he did not conceive the formula,

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

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faith or sacrament, as a problem, but for him the formula, faith and sacrament, expressed a profound synthesis.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet if for us there does appear to be an antithesis, in view of the balance of emphasis in Paul’s letters we must surely assert that faith is primary. This is made abundantly plain in such passages as Gal. ii. 20, Phil. iii. 9. Often as Paul refers to the mystical union, nowhere but in one single passage in I Corinthians (x. 16 f.) does he bring it into relation with the Supper. Certainly there are passages which leave upon our imagination the impression that Paul is a genuine sacramentalist. “The earthly and the heavenly, the natural and the supernatural, are brought into the most startling proximity. This is sacramentalism indeed. Here we are presented with an institution of Christ for His Church in which, with a divine boldness, the highest things are offered to us under the most familiar earthly forms and conditions. . . . It does not seem to me to be open to question that St. Paul takes it for granted that there was a real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the elements blessed in the Eucharist, such as should strike his converts with an awful dread of a careless approach to them.”<sup>2</sup> Yet Paul’s consistent emphasis on faith guarantees this to be an ethical sacramentalism worlds removed from the magical notions of the pagan Mysteries. The difference between the Mysteries and Paulinism is not that between a sacramental religion and a

<sup>1</sup> Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Gore, *The Reconstruction of Belief*, p. 754 f.

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purely moral religion with certain symbolic rites appended : it is the difference between an unethical and a consistently ethical sacramentalism.

We return then to our starting point and ask again how far it is true that Paul was subject to pagan influences and in his turn "paganised" Christianity. There is much to make us pause before such an admission. We are told that there is no limit to what this son of the Diaspora may have absorbed from the intellectual life of his environment. But Paul's mind leaves upon us the impression of an almost bigoted exclusiveness which, unless under the stress of such a moral revolution as convulsed his whole being on the Damascus road, is little likely to prove hospitable to alien ideas. "Although he lived in the middle of Hellenism, it is possible that Paul absorbed no more of it than a Catholic parish priest of the twentieth century does of the critical theology, and knew no more about it than an Evangelical pastor knows of theosophy."<sup>1</sup> In any case the remoulding influence of foreign conceptions is a process which takes time and requires large numbers of minds on which to make itself felt. "Syncretism" does not work and develop in individuals as it may be said to work in the religious thought of a people. The individual is affected only in so far as he is a unit in a community which is open to the play of such influences. Now Paul belongs to a period of Judaism which was no longer so open to foreign contamination as had been the case some generations earlier. "The period of

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters*, p. 87.

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assimilation was, speaking generally, at an end. The new material had been, before Paul's day, worked up alongwith the old into a set of Apocalyptic conceptions, which, in spite of the elbow-room which the heterogeneous ideas necessarily claimed for themselves, did form a system, and appeared from without as relatively complete and self-sufficing."<sup>1</sup> And Paul was a true son of contemporary Judaism. Hence we find that authorities like Harnack, whose "*History of Dogma*" begins only after Paul, and Edwin Hatch, in his Hibbert Lectures on "*The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*," have concluded that the Hellenisation of Christianity, not to say its "paganisation," began only after Paul, and that the forces which led to it were not to any extent set in motion by him. But perhaps most significant of all is the fact that, in spite of the keenness of the dispute between Paul and the more strictly orthodox leaders at Jerusalem, there is no trace of any charge being brought against him of having "paganised" the Gospel. If the doctrine of the Apostle of the Gentiles had really sprung from heathen soil it is inconceivable that the "pillar-Apostles" would not have assailed it on this ground, and the fact that they did not do so should warn us against too lightly doing so ourselves.

So far at least as Paul's doctrine of the Eucharist is concerned (whatever may be said of his teaching about Baptism) the experts on comparative religion have had little success in explaining it from the notions of the Mystery Religions. By what wind

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, p. 176 f.

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was the seed of the crude conception of "eating the god" wafted into the mind of the Apostle? And by what possibility could it have taken root and borne fruit in his stony Jewish heart? It is of course perfectly true that *a priori* it is equally inconceivable that a rigidly monotheistic Jew could have accepted as Lord and Christ a crucified Nazarene. Yet Paul did so. There is also some force in the argument that Paul justified to himself his acceptance of sacramental ideas, which were in fact heathen, by first importing them into the Jewish Scriptures. Witness his fantastic discovery of a prototype of Baptism in the crossing of the Red Sea and of the communion meal in the drinking by the people of the water from the rock which "was Christ." "As heathen Paul would no doubt rigorously exclude heathen ideas. But how easy it was for him to believe that they were not heathen, but really Jewish!"<sup>1</sup> Though the Apostle is much too hostile to paganism in general for us to admit that he is likely to have been attracted and influenced by the rites of any particular cult, it is equally impossible to deny that he employs much of the language and some of the ideas of his Hellenistic environment. But it is very difficult to see by what canons we are to decide what proportion of this is due to conscious or unconscious borrowing, and what proportion to the fact that Paul is but speaking the language common to all mystics, for the simple reason that in their Christian faith he and his converts passed through the same experiences and

<sup>1</sup> Percy Gardner, *The Religious Experience of St. Paul*, p. 124.

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found the same satisfaction as in some poor measure did the heathen initiate in his own Mystery cult. Paul himself draws the parallel between pagan feasts and the Christian rite, and if he did not consider the analogy to be real his whole argument loses its point. Must it not be acknowledged that as “to all men he became all things, to save some by all and every means,” the native texture of Paul’s thought may have taken on a coloration alien to itself yet destined to have a profound effect on the subsequent development of Christian sacramental doctrine?

But on the whole it must be said that the suggestion of a Mystery influence upon Paul’s doctrine has been grossly overworked. Such a theory unjustifiably minimises the Jewish basis of the primitive Christianity inherited by Paul. “To drag in the ‘*Taurobolium*’ and the ‘*renatus in æternum*’ to explain New Testament ideas, while ignoring the historical connections which these ideas assert for themselves, is mere wantonness.”<sup>1</sup> As applied to Paul in particular the theory does not take sufficient account of the general body of his teaching, and especially of his emphasis on faith as the universal coefficient of all spiritual blessing; and it ignores the part played by personal experience in the development of Paul’s thought. Above all it lightheartedly confuses Paul the missionary with Paul the theologian. It is as a missionary that Paul is chiefly important in his own life time: his theological fame is posthumous. And as a missionary

<sup>1</sup> Denney, Article *Regeneration* in Hastings D.C.G.

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he may have realised that the heathen Mysteries were part of a *preparatio evangelica*, that the ideas which he sought to preach concerning guilt and purgation, redemption and fellowship, were the same ideas as those with which the Mysteries were occupied, and that the Mysteries had thus taught men already to speak and think of these things, and had equipped contemporary thought with a terminology in which Christian doctrine could be presented to Hellenistic converts. And Paul the missionary, even at the expense of disloyalty to Paul the theologian, used the tools which lay ready to hand. The subsequent growth of superstition may be due in part to the seed which Paul sowed, but it is due far more to the fertility of the ground on which it fell. At heart Paul is found ultimately loyal to the ethical foundations of his faith ; to quote a fine passage by F. G. Peabody,<sup>1</sup> “ Hellenic mysticism reacts into Hebrew piety. Though it be true that Paul soars away into the clouds, it is not less true that he makes a safe landing on solid ground. . . . However rashly he may appropriate foreign material he remains at heart a Jew. . . . Paul’s eager mind moves, as it were, round a great circle of faith, from simplicity to complexity, and back to simplicity again ; from the spiritual to the supernatural and on to the spiritual ; from symbolism to sacrament and on to loyalty.”

<sup>1</sup> *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, p. 208.

*Last 40 pp*

## CHAPTER X

### The Johannine Conception of the Sacrament

THE inspired instinct of the Christian Church has always felt "St. John"—whoever be the personality behind the name—to be the greatest of New Testament teachers on the subject of the Sacraments. Again and again, with hints not always obvious save to those who have insight into his mind and method, he points his readers to the two great rites of his Church. Here is Jesus telling Nicodemus that a man is "born anew" into the redeemed society not only by a spiritual renovation but also "of water," through the rite of Christian baptism. Now He warns the multitude that "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life within you," now the inner circle that "unless I wash you, you will not share My lot." It is with good reason that medieval artists are wont to portray Peter carrying the keys, Paul the sword, but John the sacramental cup.

It is assumed here that the Fourth Gospel is not an eye-witness' account of Jesus' ministry conforming to historical standards, but rather a didactic meditation on the drama of Christ's life expressing

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the writer's convictions as to who Christ is and what He means to the Church. It is a free composition which sprang directly out of the life of the Church at the end of the first century, bearing upon its face unmistakable marks both of its *milieu* and its age, reflecting the problems and controversies of that age, and understandable only as the Evangelist's attempt to interpret to his own time the timeless verities of the Christian faith. If the unchanging Gospel was to live for a new age it had to be re-interpreted in the light of contemporary experience and perplexity. Hence almost unconsciously John alters the perspective of the earlier Gospels, and, looking at Jesus' life across the intervening years, reads into words and incidents the point of view of his own generation. Nowhere is it so necessary to recognise this as in connection with John's sacramental teaching. For example, we can no longer "assume, as earlier interpreters invariably assumed, that the teaching of John vi., as we read it now, is historically prior to the words at the Last Supper recorded in St. Mark as well as to the teaching of St. Paul. We must allow the Fourth Gospel to interpret itself in the light of the known conditions of the age in which it was written."<sup>1</sup> John writes at a time when, on account of the growth of church-consciousness in the Christian community, sacramental doctrine had a centrality which would have been utterly impossible in the Galilean and Jerusalem environment wherein the scene of the Gospel narrative purports to be laid.

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Creed, in *The Modern Churchman*, October, 1926, p. 366.

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Of special importance is the controversial note in the Gospel, echoing as it does the debates not so much of the Palestine of Jesus' day as of the Ephesian community for which John wrote. Mystic though John be the tone of his sacramental teaching gives more than a suggestion that he is also "a man of affairs, steeped to the eyes in the controversies and the practical needs of his own community, an ecclesiastical statesman, a polemical theologian, a prophet of denunciation and correction."<sup>1</sup> Though on account of the narrative form in which John's work is cast the polemical interest is on the surface sometimes less obvious than in Paul's letters, his sacramental emphasis is probably born of controversy none the less truly than is Paul's invective in the great sacramental passages in 1st Corinthians. Only in the light of the opposition confronted shall we appreciate the exact colour of the Evangelist's thought.

Of these opponents there would seem to have been two main camps. The first was that of the Jews. In every local synagogue fierce antagonism would exist against the new Christian "heresy," so that the Church was constantly on its defence against the Jewish community from which many of its older members had come and whence it still drew frequent recruits. "The Jews," irrespective of the various sects in Jesus' own day, appear regularly as a kind of "official opposition" to Christ, and their disputes with our Lord—not least concerning the Sacraments—suggest the polemics of a later age,

<sup>1</sup> John Naish, in *The Expositor*, January, 1922, p. 54.

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when Christian theology had been definitely formulated and Christianity and Judaism faced each other as rivals in a common Gentile environment. Above all Christianity "came into collision with Judaism through its Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The conflict between Jesus and the Jews in the Fourth Gospel comes to a head in the great Eucharistic discussion (vi. 32-79), a discussion which was plainly impossible in our Lord's life-time, before the Sacrament was yet instituted. It belongs to a later age, when the Supper had become the central object of the Jewish attack on Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

The second element in the contemporary religious situation with which John finds himself confronted is the realistic magic-sacramentalism of the Mysteries which was already infecting the Christian Church, so that Ignatius, practically a contemporary of the Evangelist, sees a mystic identity between faith and "the flesh of the Lord" and between love and "the blood of Jesus Christ,"<sup>2</sup> and can speak of "breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote that we should not die but live for ever in Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> Of the problems involved in the reconciliation of such notions with the more spiritual interpretation of sacramental grace which is peculiarly his own John shows himself fully conscious.

It is my conviction that the blending of two conflicting tendencies, which we will find so apparent

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel, its Purpose and Theology*, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Trall.* 8; *Rom.* 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ephes.* 20.

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in John's treatment of the Sacraments, is to be explained largely by the exigencies of a polemic directed against these two, to the Evangelist, equally distasteful yet mutually discordant attitudes to the two great Christian rites. In the Gospel we see John's "high" sacramental doctrine gradually formulating itself in the stress of controversy with orthodox Jews on the one hand and Hellenist Mystery-devotees on the other.

John's historical treatment of the Supper differs mainly in three respects from that of the Synoptists :

(1) Firstly, the date of the Last Supper is according to John the 13th Nisan, not the 14th. This divergence has already been fully discussed and need not detain us.<sup>1</sup> We have seen reason to suppose that John's chronology is at least for this once accurate. Yet in a Gospel "where outward facts are all invested with a symbolic value, this deviation from the unanimous testimony of tradition cannot be regarded as accidental,"<sup>2</sup> or indeed merely in the interests of accurate history. The effect of the correction is to dissociate the Last Supper from the regular Passover Meal, and to make it appear that "Christ our Passover" was crucified at the very hour of the slaying of the Paschal lambs.<sup>3</sup> If John admits a certain kinship between the Christian rite and the Jewish Passover meal, it is not because, as in the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 38 f.

pp. 38 - 49

<sup>2</sup> E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> For the bearing of "Quartodecimanism" on this question, see Bacon's chapter in his *Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*. This aspect of the problem is omitted here, for there is no evidence that the controversy about the true date of Easter had yet arisen at the beginning of the second century.

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Synoptic accounts, the Supper was celebrated at that meal, but because "Christ dying like the Paschal lamb, the Eucharist follows His death as the Paschal meal follows the immolation of the lamb."<sup>1</sup> There is no suggestion that the Eucharist repeats the sacrifice of Calvary which upon the Cross was accomplished once for all (xix. 30); but in the Eucharist the faithful do feed on the "real" Passover victim.

(2) Why John with his intense love of the symbolical should have chosen to omit from his account of the Last Supper all reference to the institution of the Sacrament is one of our chief problems. Some would argue, very unconvincingly, that the reason is merely that John thinks it unnecessary to repeat what was already recorded by Mark. Others explain the omission as due to a desire, apparent elsewhere in the Gospel (e.g. the silence concerning Jesus' own baptism and the remark that "Jesus Himself did not baptize"; iv. 2), "to detach the higher Christian teaching from mere occasion of history, and instead to attach it to the eternal realities of the spiritual world."<sup>2</sup> In any case the result is that the Last Supper is no longer the focus of Eucharistic ideas. As Prof. C. H. Dodd well says,<sup>3</sup> "it is certainly a remarkable fact that the writer who must every Sunday of his life have taken part in a meal directly intended to recall that solemn Supper should, in giving to the

<sup>1</sup> Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Percy Gardner, *The Ephesian Gospel*, p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> *The Expositor*, December, 1911, p. 531.

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world his interpretation of the life of Christ in its eternal significance, have recorded the last meal of Jesus with His disciples without a hint of the ceremonial and symbolic element which the Church had piously perpetuated from its earliest period. Here is a phenomenon that calls for explanation."

Hardly less significant than the omission is the substitution of the incident of the feet-washing as the central rite at the Supper. What in the other Gospels appears as the observance of a sacramental rite, prefiguring the fully-developed Eucharist of the later Church, becomes a simple Agapé, or love-feast, while the words of institution are supplanted by the "new commandment"—"that you love one another." If the Evangelist had been historically minded this might look like a deliberate correction of traditional history. But he is no historian, and generally speaking it may be said that he presupposes his predecessors and, save for dogmatic reasons, does not set out either to correct or supersede them. Nor need it be denied, on the other hand, that we have in the story of the feet-washing a genuine piece of apostolic tradition; the illustration of a moral lesson by such an acted parable is quite in the manner of Jesus. But the lesson inculcated is quite different from the higher Eucharistic teaching, the idea of union between divine and human in the sacramental repast, traditionally attached to the Last Supper. There seems no reason why, if he had so desired, John should not have recorded both the Institution and the feet-washing. That he prefers by deliberate omission and substitution thus to

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change the emphasis indicates a definite doctrinal motive.

(3) Finally, we must explain why John, having detached his Eucharistic teaching from the Last Supper, chooses to attach it to the miracle of the feeding of the multitude in Chapter vi. The Eucharistic bearing of the chapter is undeniable, the very language being technical and the points in dispute reflecting, as usual, the controversies of the Evangelist's own day. The significance appears to lie in the association of sacramental ideas not with the circumstances attendant upon Christ's death, but with an act of power illustrative of His life-giving grace; and herein we shall find another key to the understanding of the whole tendency and purpose of the writer's sacramental teaching.

We now pass to a survey of the passages which appear to have a sacramental intention. It has been thought that just as the "breaking of bread" is pictured in the feeding of the multitude so is the "cup of the covenant" in the miracle of Cana; in the narrative there is a reference both to Jesus' *hour* (ii. 4) and to the "displaying of His *glory*" (ii. 11), and both of these words are regularly used in the Gospel with the Cross in view; the supply of wine, it is argued, thus typifies the provision by Christ for His own of a transcendent drink in His Eucharistic blood. The parallelism between this miracle and that of the loaves is obvious; John undoubtedly intends his story of the distribution of the loaves to be understood as symbolical of the

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eating of Christ's flesh, and vi. 53-56 seems to require a parallel illustration of the drinking of His blood. The distribution of the wine to the guests would represent the shedding of the blood, and the whole incident would be read as a symbolical elaboration of Matt. xxvi. 28. The two miracles in question are however placed in two entirely different sections of the Gospel, and any reference in the first section to the Last Supper is probably quite secondary, for the Evangelist's main purpose in this section is to set in the forefront of the Gospel the thought of the supplanting of the water of Judaism by the good wine of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Later Christian thought certainly associated the two miracles, so that the changing of water into wine and the multiplication of the loaves appear as sacramental counterparts. But this is a later construction, and for John himself the Eucharistic intention is not at any rate primary.

Similarly it is argued that the thought of the Eucharistic cup is present in the figure of the "living water" (iv. 10), again at first sight an obvious parallel to Christ's image of Himself as "the bread of life." "The bread which came down from heaven, in the one discourse, is exactly parallel to the living water, which is a flowing spring of life in a man, in the other discourse. . . . In both the moral is exactly the same—the salvation of men through partaking of the life of Christ."<sup>2</sup> But here,

<sup>1</sup> See G. H. C. Macgregor, *The Gospel of John* (Moffatt New Testament Commentary) p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, *The Ephesian Gospel*, p. 208.

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too, it is doubtful whether there is any conscious allusion to the Eucharist. It is true that the "water" like the "bread" is associated with eternal life and represented as the perfect satisfaction of the soul (iv. 14). But unlike the "bread" (vi. 51) the "water" is never either said to be Christ Himself or to be the means of attaining to immortality. Rather is the "living water" used as a figure of the gift by Christ of that Spirit which is itself the secret of eternal life: it is symbolical of a spiritual life which never grows stagnant but has the property of perpetually reproducing itself. Similarly in vii. 37-39 the Evangelist himself declares "water" to be symbolical of the Spirit, which according to John is the perpetual renewer of Christ's work in the soul, and therefore is well compared with a perennial stream. The thought of the "living water" thus belongs to a different set of ideas from those circling around the Eucharist; if there be a secondary reference to the Eucharist, then the strong emphasis on the Spirit rather than on the external rite is exceedingly significant.

If compensation be sought for the omission from the Fourth Gospel of the cup of the Supper it will be found neither in the wine of Cana, nor in the water of Sychar, but in the figure of the Vine in the Farewell Discourse. We have already noted the reference to the "vine of David" in the Eucharistic prayers of the *Didache*,<sup>1</sup> and it is clear that the vine was a recognised Eucharistic symbol at the time the Gospel was written. But hitherto its significance

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 75, 151.

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had been mainly eschatological, a pledge of the coming of the Kingdom. John gives the symbolism a new turn and employs it, still in association with the Eucharist, to express the Pauline idea of the union of the members with the body, of the believer with his Lord. A careful study of the allegory in Chapter xv. will show that it has close affinities with the Eucharistic ideas of Chapter xiii. and frequently echoes its thought.<sup>1</sup> It supplements likewise Chapter vi. "I am the *real* vine" balances "I am the bread of life," the two corresponding to the blessings in the *Didache* over the cup and the loaf respectively. But John's vine-symbolism goes far beyond that of the *Didache*. In accordance with a development already noted<sup>2</sup> it follows more closely the symbolism of the bread. Just as believers feed on Christ's flesh and so appropriate His nature, so does the life of Christ the Vine pass like the sap into His followers who are the branches, so that His nature becomes theirs: "they abide in Him and He in them." It is Paul's doctrine of the mystical union of the Church with Christ her Head, but it is the same doctrine expressed from a different viewpoint. For not only does John relate it definitely to the Eucharistic symbolism; but by choosing this particular way of compensating for the omission of the cup of the covenant he excludes what for Paul had become the chief significance of that cup, the commemoration of the shedding of Christ's blood, to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. xv. 2-3 with xiii. 10-11; xv. 16 with xiii. 18; xv. 20 with xiii. 16.

<sup>2</sup>P. 73.

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which there is no reference in the allegory. The reason for this apparently deliberate omission can be suggested only after we have completed our survey.

Apart from the allegory of the Vine the whole of the Farewell Discourse breathes a sacramental atmosphere. The “new commandment” of love would appear almost to take the place of the “new covenant” of Luke and Paul, though it is probably a false exegesis which finds in the word *ἀγαπᾶτε* (xiii. 34) an allusion to the *ἀγάπη*, or collective repast, wherein the Eucharist was enshrined, as if in the mention of the new commandment of “love” John intends to record the institution of the sacramental love-feast. Thus the frequent references in the First Epistle of John to *ἀγάπη* have sometimes been given a similar force and a sacramental interest deeper than on the surface has been read into the letter. For example in 1 John i. 6-7 the mention of “communion” and “the blood” has been thought to constitute an allusion to the Sacrament; and it is even suggested that 1 John iii. 1 should be understood: “What an Agapé (as a means of grace) the Father has given us in order that we should be called children of God”; that is, the Supper is a divine institution which has for its end to make men sons of God.<sup>1</sup> This surely is far-fetched, though the translation certainly gives the Greek preposition *īva* its correct causative force and avoids the awkwardness of the expression “give a love” in the sense of “give a proof of love.” But a

<sup>1</sup> See Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

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serious objection to the sacramental interpretation of ἀγάπη here is that, as constantly in the Epistle, it is a question of the love of God the Father, while the Agapé in the Christian Church was expressive rather of the mutual love of Christian for Christian (as indeed is frequently the force of the word in I John) and the Supper was never "God's Supper" but "the Lord's."

It seems clear that the Church early came to regard Jesus' prayer of consecration in Chapter xvii. as a Eucharistic thanksgiving. The prominence of the ideas of unity (vv. 11, 21, 23) and consecration (vv. 15, 17, 19) prompts the question whether John does not intend to present Jesus as president at that first and greatest of Eucharists wherein He consecrated His own body to death. This conclusion is perhaps confirmed by the analogy of the Eucharistic prayers of the *Didache* where the topics dwelt on—life, faith, knowledge, immortality—are very similar.<sup>1</sup>

Still more suggestive are the echoes of the *Kiddush* liturgy (on which the *Didache* prayers were also probably modelled) which may be heard throughout the Farewell Discourses; for if these addresses are in any way historical we should expect them to reflect the ideas of Passover-*Kiddush*, which, if our theory of the occasion of the Last Supper be correct, would form the background of the company's thoughts. The most obvious parallels may be briefly stated.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> See Oesterley, *op. cit.*, pp. 184 ff.

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(a) The work of creation followed by the hallowing of the Sabbath Rest; *Kiddûsh*: "And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done . . . and God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it"; compare John xvii. 4-5: "I have glorified Thee on earth by accomplishing the work Thou gavest Me to do; now, Father, glorify Me in Thy presence . . ."

(b) The blessing over the wine; *Kiddûsh*: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King Eternal, who createst the fruit of the Vine"; compare John xv. 1, 8, 16.

(c) The thought of election; *Kiddûsh*: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King Eternal, Who hast chosen us from all peoples, and hast exalted us above all tongues, and hast sanctified us by Thy commandments"; compare John xiii. 18, xv. 16, xv. 19.

(d) The thought of joy; *Kiddûsh*: "And Thou hast . . . appointed times for gladness, festivals and seasons for joy"; compare John xv. 11, xvi. 22, xvii. 13.

(e) The thought of freedom; *Kiddûsh*: "This Sabbath day and this feast of Unleavened Bread, the season of our freedom"; compare John xv. 15.

As Dr. Oesterley points out, the importance of these parallels is that they supply corroborative evidence that the occasion of the Last Supper was the *Kiddûsh* meal preceding the Passover proper. Incidentally they suggest that the Farewell Discourses in the Fourth Gospel may contain a larger kernel of the authentic words of Jesus than is often supposed.

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There are several passages in which John seems deliberately to bring into close relation the two sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. The most striking is the account of the feet-washing, which is discussed below. Another is xix. 34: “one of the soldiers pricked His side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water.” Though the medical evidence is extremely doubtful, the traditional interpretation is that, the cause of Jesus’ death being rupture of the heart, a spear thrust in the pericardium was followed by a flow of blood and watery lymph. It is possible that the Evangelist, with an apologetic purpose directed against Docetic doctrine, calls attention to the phenomenon as a proof that Christ really died upon the Cross. But it is necessary for us, as Sanday well remarks,<sup>1</sup> “to distinguish between the fact itself . . . and the train of speculation to which it gave rise.” It is the latter, the symbolical meaning of what may or may not be a natural phenomenon, which is important for John, and the shedding of “blood” and “water” almost certainly typifies the bestowal of the benefits of Christ’s death and of the gift of the Spirit in the two Christian sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism. The thought of Jesus’ death being immediately before us, “blood,” the symbol of the Eucharist, is mentioned first.

In 1 John v. 6 on the other hand Baptism, according to the logical order of the sacraments, is alluded to first: “Jesus Christ, He it is who came by water, blood, and Spirit—not by the water alone, but by

<sup>1</sup> *Criticism of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 181.

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the water and the blood.” In this passage there is something more than an attempt to combat Docetism by pointing to two historical facts of the ministry which might seem to refute its tenets, the water by which Jesus was baptised and the blood which He shed on the Cross. As in xix. 34 there would seem to be a double reference to the two Christian sacraments. In particular does John insist on the importance of the Eucharist: Christ came “not by the water alone, but by the water and the blood.” He instituted not only Baptism but also the Eucharist, and both alike are essential signs and seals of the true Church. It has been suggested that John has in view a group of Ephesian Christians, of whom Apollos may have been one,<sup>1</sup> who had knowledge only of water-baptism as preached by John the Baptist, but neither observed the Eucharist nor had experience of the gift of the Spirit. Mention is also made in the *Clementine Recognitions*,<sup>2</sup> which date perhaps from the early third century, of the fact that “some even of the disciples of John, who seemed to be great ones, have separated themselves and proclaimed their own Master as Christ.” The movement probably began much earlier and may be envisaged here. It is certainly significant that, on every mention of the Baptist, John pointedly emphasises his subordination to Jesus,<sup>1</sup> and it may well be that he wishes to counteract a contemporary Jewish movement which sought to buttress its

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 25; xix. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> i. 54.

<sup>1</sup> See i. 6 ff., i. 19 ff., i. 30, iv. 1 etc.

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opposition to the spread of Christianity by exalting the Baptist at the expense of Christ. The true Church, John insists, has as its three-fold seal Baptism, the Eucharist, and the gift of the Spirit which is alike bestowed by both and in turn guarantees their validity: "The Spirit is the witness to this, for the Spirit is truth."

There are two passages in which John seems to contemplate an unworthy participation in the Sacrament and its hurtful results. In vi. 26 Jesus says: "It is not because you saw signs that you are in quest of Me, but because you ate these loaves and had your fill." Like Paul's Corinthian converts, in their abuse of the Supper the crowd at the lake-side thought only of material nourishment and not of that spiritual "life" which was Christ's true gift. They had eyes only for the symbol, not for the reality which lay behind; in fact, even the symbol appealed to them only because it brought with it bodily satisfaction. Still more pointed is xiii. 27 where, as in 1 Cor. xi. 29, unworthy communion reacts to the positive injury of the participant: "And when Judas took the bread, at that moment Satan entered him." In the very act of receiving the bread Judas surrendered his soul to evil: the sacramental meal became for him the means of communion not with Christ but with the devil; he "drank to his own condemnation."

We have reserved till the end consideration of the two chief sacramental chapters of the Gospel. Chapter xiii. contains the story of the washing of the disciples' feet, which takes the place occupied in the

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Synoptics by the institution of the Supper. The result of the substitution is to stress the truth that the Sacrament can be effective only when the Spirit of the Master possesses the disciples. The bequest which Jesus left His friends in the Sacrament was not a ritual ordinance, but a spirit of love and service which would unite them in fellowship one with another and with Himself and would be the badge of their discipleship (xiii. 34 f.). John here emphasises the ethical aspect of the Lord's Supper, the neglect of which renders impossible, as Paul had already declared, the appropriation of that dying love of Jesus which in the Sacrament we symbolise : " Unless I wash you, you will not share My lot " (xiii. 8).

We note first that by making the idea of " washing," which cannot but be suggestive of Baptism, the central feature of the incident which takes the place of the Institution, John emphasises once again the intimate connection between the two sacraments. Likewise the necessity of the two sacraments is again stressed : " Unless I wash you, you will not share My lot." The words might be superficially understood in the sense that only if washed could Peter sit at the Table with Jesus ; but the deeper meaning is that only through the possession of Christ's *spirit* is vital union with Him possible, only through the baptism of the Spirit, ministered symbolically in the two sacraments, can the believer have communion with Christ and share in the benefits of His death. So again when Jesus says (xiii. 10), " He who has bathed only needs to have his feet washed," on the surface the meaning may be that the guest who comes to table, first having

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bathed in his own home, needs only to have the dust of the road removed from his feet. But again the words have a deeper sense : for those who are true disciples the experience of regeneration symbolised in their initial baptism has no need to be repeated ; what does need to be repeated is the “ washing of the feet,” the removal of life’s travel-stains by fellowship with Jesus, the doing for the sake of others what Christ has done for us. Baptismal regeneration remains effective only if the Spirit of Jesus is perpetuated. So far as there is allusion here to the sacraments, Baptism is typified rather in the washing of the whole body than in the feet-washing, which, taking the place of the Institution, symbolises all that is implied in the Eucharist—the giving of the Lord Himself in service to humanity. “ He who has bathed needs only to have his feet washed : ” in the practice of the Church Baptism is not repeated, but the Eucharist, the washing of the feet, is.

There follows, in place of the command to “ do this in memory of Me,” the reminder that “ if I have washed your feet . . . you are bound to wash one another’s feet ; for I have been setting you an example, that you should do what I have done to you ” (xiii. 14 f.)—an injunction to perpetuate “ not the act itself but its moral essence.”<sup>1</sup> The service of our fellows in the Spirit of Christ is the truest of all sacraments. The climax is reached in xiii. 34 with the giving of “ a new command, to love one another, as I have loved you,” which for John seems to take the place of the actual Institution of the Sacrament.

<sup>1</sup> Meyer.

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The “new command” is parallel to the “new covenant ratified by My blood” (I Cor. xi. 25); and the inference is that it is not merely a common ritual, but the spirit of mutual love, which gives the right to the title of a Christian disciple: “By this everyone will recognise that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.”

We pass finally to Chapter vi. which is the chief *locus* for John’s sacramental doctrine. The Eucharistic bearing of the chapter is indeed still disputed; generally speaking Catholic expositors, followed by the more modern critical school, have interpreted the chapter sacramentally, while conservative Protestants have denied all reference to the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the Evangelist’s own intention, the Church very early connected the miracle of the loaves with the Sacrament, as is plain not only from the writings of the time, but also from the paintings of the Roman Catacombs. And that this agrees with John’s own intention seems abundantly clear from the use of Eucharistic language and symbolism throughout the narrative. Indeed this appears even in Mark, especially in the account of the meal of the four thousand, where the word *εὐχαριστησας* (Mark viii. 6) is used in place of *εὐλόγησας* (Mark vi. 41), and as compared with the narrative of the feeding of the five thousand, which is simple and vivid, the whole wording is much more formal, not to say liturgical.

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the interpretation of John vi. see especially M. Schmidt, *Die Verheissung des Eucharistie (Joh. 6) bei den Vatern*, Würzburg, 1900; and Zahn, *Das Ev. des Joh.*, p. 344 f.

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In characteristic fashion John selects from the Synoptic material at his disposal an outstanding miracle as a frontispiece to an exposition of the meaning of the Eucharist. Accordingly there are details in his account of the miracle which can be appreciated only in the light of the discourse to which it leads up. The story opens with the remark that "the Passover, the Jewish festival, was at hand" (vi. 4), which is probably more than a mere note of time and is "designed to give a clue to the understanding of the spiritual lessons of the miracle which are set forth in the discourse which followed."<sup>1</sup> John conceives that Jesus, in the miraculous meal, provided a substitute for the approaching festival, at which He did not intend to be present in person, and thereby implies that the Christian Sacrament is destined finally to supplant the Jewish Passover.

In John's account, in contrast to that of the Synoptists, the anxiety about food originates with Jesus Himself, not with the disciples. Considered symbolically the alteration is significant: Christ ever takes the initiative and His gifts to His own are all of free grace. In like manner it is Jesus Himself who distributes the food apart from any mediation by the disciples. As at the Last Supper the seated rows receive His bounty from the hand of the Host Himself. John, too, alone mentions the slave boy who brought the food and adds that the loaves were of barley. Possibly he intends a reference to the paschal loaves, while Loisy<sup>2</sup> somewhat fancifully suggests that the

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *Gospel of St. John, in loc.*

<sup>2</sup> *Le Quatrième Evangile*, p. 225.

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boy typifies the "auxiliary minister" at the early Christian Eucharistic service. When Jesus asks a blessing, like the head of a household at a religious meal, the sacramental atmosphere is intensified by the use of the solemn word *εὐχαριστησας* (vi. 11). Finally, John alone records that "when they were satisfied, Jesus said to the disciples, Gather up the pieces left over, so that nothing may be wasted," thus emphasising the sacredness of the sacramental bread. The words sound almost like an instruction for the conduct of the Eucharistic liturgy.

There follows the miracle the long discourse to which it forms an introductory illustration. But in between we have the story of Jesus walking on the water, and its insertion at this place may be due not only to its analogous position in Mark, where it follows the feeding of the five thousand, but also to its fitness to serve as an introduction to the sacramental discourse on "the bread of life." The miracle in part meets the objection of verses 52 and 60 by hinting that Jesus' corporeality was of a peculiar kind which transcended the limits both of gravity and space. The way is thus prepared even for the miracle foreshadowed in verse 62. It is possible, too, that John may be seeking to combat exaggerated ideas current in his own day as to the exclusive presence of Christ in the Eucharist alone. His is a true spiritual presence wherever His disciples are in straits.

The discourse which follows presents more problems than any other section of the Gospel.

## *It starts on the seashore* Eucharistic Origins

To begin with its unity has been questioned. On the assumption that two scenes are distinguished—the seashore (vi. 25) and the synagogue (vi. 59)—and also two audiences—the crowd (vi. 22) and the Jews (vi. 41 and 52)—it has been suggested that we have here a conflation of two separate discourses, an address to the crowd on the seashore, and a controversy with the Jews in the synagogue. In particular verses 52-59 have sometimes been considered an interpolation. But this is purely conjecture and in any case does not destroy the religious and theological unity of the discourse, which must be treated as it stands as an expression of the thought, if not in its entirety of the Evangelist himself, at any rate of the Johannine school.

It will be noticed that as the discourse develops the language becomes more and more definitely sacramental. To the demand for a "sign" which would surpass even Moses' gift of the manna, Jesus speaks of a bestowment far more marvellous than any given by Moses: "It is My Father who gives you the *real* bread from heaven; for the bread of God is what comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (vi. 32 f.). The people reply, "Give us that bread always," whereupon Jesus declares, "I am the bread of life," that is, the bread which supplies or communicates life. He Himself is this bread, and communion with Him will result in perfect satisfaction: "He who comes to Me will never be hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty again." The thought is already Eucharistic, but it is noticeable that the appropriation of

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the gift is so far expressed not by a word suggestive of mere physical action but by "come to Me," "believe in Me," both expressions implying a moral impulse and hinting a protest against a purely materialistic conception of sacramental grace.

At this point the Jews begin to "murmur at Him" (vi. 41), the objectors clearly being representative not so much of the Galilean Jews of Jesus' day as of the opponents of the Church in Asia Minor at the end of the first century. On resuming Jesus' language becomes more pointedly sacramental: "The bread that comes down from heaven is such that one eats of it and never dies. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever" (vi. 50 f.). For the first time immortality is definitely connected with the gift of the "bread." Also for the first time the act of appropriation is spoken of not as "coming" or "believing" but in so many words as "eating." The way is thus prepared for the definitely sacramental pronouncement to which the whole discourse has been leading up: "The bread I will give is My flesh, given for the life of the world."

The crucial point here is the intention of the word "flesh," and this is better considered in relation to verse 53 when after more incredulous "wrangling" on the part of the Jews the discourse reaches its climax in the great declaration: "Truly, truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life within you." The words have been very variously interpreted both in ancient and modern times. Chrysostom

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and Cyril see in "flesh" a reference to the Eucharistic element: "Wherefore," writes Chrysostom,<sup>1</sup> "this also had Christ done, to lead us to a closer friendship, and to show His love for us; He hath given those who desire Him, not only to see Him, but even to touch and eat Him and fix their teeth in His flesh and embrace Him and satisfy all their love." Origen, on the other hand, allegorises in the most fanciful manner, and understands "the flesh of the Son of man" to mean "doctrines."<sup>2</sup> Augustine expounds the idea of "eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man" as meaning to have fellowship with the Body of Christ which is the Church: "He who does not abide in Christ, and in whom Christ does not abide, doubtless does not eat His flesh, nor drink His blood, although he eats and drinks the sacrament of so great a thing to his own judgment."<sup>3</sup> In more modern times the rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation has usually been accompanied by an unwillingness to accept a Eucharistic interpretation of the passage. Waterland for example argues that John vi. may perhaps be *applied* to the Eucharist, but must not be *interpreted* of it.<sup>4</sup> Similarly Westcott denies the Eucharistic reference and, in verse 51 at least, will not even allow an allusion to Christ's death: the word *flesh* "describes human nature in its totality regarded from its earthly side. . . . The

<sup>1</sup> *Hom. in Joann.*, xlvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Hom. in Num.*, xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> *Tract. in Job.* xxvi., 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Works*, Vol. vii, p. 135.

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thought here is of support and growth, not of atonement.”<sup>1</sup>

But no interpretation is adequate which fails to recognise that John’s main purpose in thus identifying the life-giving bread with Christ’s *flesh* is pointedly to bring into prominence the sacramental bearing of the whole discourse. If this is not apparent in verse 51 it becomes abundantly plain in verse 53 where the idea of drinking Christ’s blood is added to that of eating His flesh. The use of the double symbolism seems to establish the Eucharistic intention of the passage beyond question. Those who deny this hold that the addition of the phrase “drink His blood” is intended merely to bring into prominence Christ’s atoning death: “To eat the flesh is to contemplate by faith the holy life of the Lord . . . to drink the blood is also to contemplate His violent death, to make it our ransom, to taste its atoning efficacy.”<sup>2</sup> But in view of the fact that we have now had reproduced in this chapter the whole terminology of the sacramental ritual as given in Matt. xxvi. 26-28, it can hardly be denied that John has the Eucharist quite definitely in view. If it be objected that John uses the word *σάρξ* instead of *σῶμα*, we would refer back to what has been said above<sup>3</sup> about the greater suitability of *flesh* as a correlative of *blood*, once the symbolism of the cup had come to be regarded as exactly parallel to that of the bread. Moreover John is emphasising the

<sup>1</sup> *Gospel of St. John, in loc.*

<sup>2</sup> Godet, *Commentary on St. John’s Gospel, in loc.*

<sup>3</sup> P. 67.

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necessity of appropriating the spiritual life of Christ, “the Logos made *flesh*,” and perhaps has his eye on Docetic heretics who denied a veritable incarnation. The older term *body* was susceptible of various interpretations. Though human in appearance a *body* might be unsubstantial and exempt from human suffering and death. But the word *flesh* explicitly affirms a true incarnation. “Here is a possible clue to the change in Eucharistic terminology. ‘Body’ became ‘flesh’ because the Church was endangered by the denial that Jesus had ‘come in the flesh.’”<sup>1</sup> Later New Testament usage shows that *flesh* was a favourite word in the dogmatic writings of the time (I Pet. iii. 18, iv. 1; I Tim. iii. 16; cf. also Barnabas v. 6; Hermas Sim., V, vi. 5-7) and is the word used in the sacramental ritual by Justin and by Ignatius, who declares that “the Eucharist is the *flesh* of our Saviour Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

We conclude then that verse 53 amounts to an assertion that “life” can belong only to the members of the Church of Christ who have made confession of their faith by partaking of the Christian Sacrament. Not only are the words explicitly Eucharistic but in verse 54, where Jesus says, “he who *feeds on* My flesh and drinks My blood possesses eternal life,” the substitution of a new and more emphatic word<sup>3</sup> seems to hint that the writer has a physical act in view. The “life” which elsewhere follows from

<sup>1</sup> Estlin Carpenter, *The Johannine Writings*, p. 434.

<sup>2</sup> *Smyrn.*, vii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Instead of *φάγειν* we have *τρωγεῖν* which is philologically identical with “chew,” though in later Greek the coarseness of its primary meaning doubtless becomes modified.

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faith (vv. 40, 47; cf. iii. 15, 16, 36) is promised as a result of a material eating and drinking whereby the disciple attains to a mystic union with his Lord. John's realism has reached its height.

Yet almost immediately we are conscious of a reaction towards a more spiritual view of sacramental grace. To yet another protest from His hearers, "This is hard to take in! Who can listen to talk like this?" Jesus replies, "So this upsets you? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He formerly existed?" (vi. 62). The intention of the reply is surely not to minimise the first difficulty by confronting the questioners with a difficulty greater still, but to hint that to-morrow will solve the riddle of to-day. The meaning appears to be: "Once you have seen Me ascend to where I formerly existed and have experienced the power of the exalted spiritual Christ, it will become manifest that no mere material eating and drinking could mediate the life of that Christ, and that as a matter of fact My words were never intended to bear that material interpretation at which you take offence." Like the miracle of the walking on the water the reference to the "Ascension" seems designed to prepare the way for the idea that Christ's "flesh" and "blood" are in the last resort non-corporeal and spiritual substances to be appropriated not in a material but in a spiritual sense, and to lead up to the pointed statement of this truth in the next verse: "What gives life is the Spirit: flesh is of no avail at all." Than this there could be no clearer affirmation of the purely spiritual nature of the

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believer's communion with his Lord, and the problem is how to reconcile it with the equally clear statement in verses 53-56 that the only guarantee of "eternal life" is in that Sacrament wherein the believer partakes under material symbols of the flesh and blood of Christ. Some would cut the knot by excising verses 52-59. But this is a counsel of despair, and it is better frankly to recognise that we have here side by side two inconsistent lines of thought which John tries, not with complete success, to harmonise. In verses 53-56 we see reflected popular conceptions of the sacramental mystery which had already become so ingrained in the faith and ritual of the Church that John did not care to ignore them, while verses 62-63 show us his desire to interpret and spiritualise these conceptions and so save the Church from superstitious materialism.

After what has been said it must be clear that in this discourse we have no verbatim report of Jesus' own words, but rather an apology, put by anticipation into the mouth of Jesus, for the Christian Sacrament against its detractors in John's own day. It is incredible that Jesus could have addressed teaching so advanced to an audience largely composed of the common folk of Galilee, or that it should have been comprehensible to them had He done so. But in the light of the theological perplexities of John's day the discourse becomes intelligible. The stumbling-block, which makes such doctrine "hard," is apparently not so much Paul's "offence of the Cross" as the fact that He Who claimed to be the Messiah could, like some heathen mystery-monger,

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stoop to such riddles as "eating flesh," and "drinking blood," the latter thought of course being an abomination to Jews. John's purpose throughout the discourse appears to be, in face of the various types of contemporary critic, to hold the balance between a realism congenial to his Gentile environment yet inviting Jewish opprobrium, and his own more spiritual conception of sacramental efficacy.

Having completed an analysis of the evidence we may now attempt a synthesis—no easy task, for here perhaps we have the most striking example of that mingling of conflicting tendencies which is so noticeable a feature of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> The New-Testament sacramentalist *par excellence*, John yet insists that the mechanical rite is nothing apart from the spiritual gift which constitutes its inner meaning. Now the sacraments are regarded as mystically efficacious in themselves, now merely as "earthly" symbols of a "real" spiritual bestowment. "The spirit is everything, yet at the same time the earthly rendering of the spiritual counts for something, and can hardly be dispensed with."<sup>2</sup> John leaves the impression, as Paul does not, that he is acutely conscious not only of the ethical but also of the metaphysical problems raised by the sacraments, and that he is directly concerned to meet them. His interpreter must therefore always have in view the contemporary situation, and it is in the reaction of John's thought to the exigencies of this situation

<sup>1</sup> See Macgregor, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Percy Gardner, *The Ephesian Gospel*, p. 198.

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that we shall find the clue to the unravelling of the various strands in his sacramental doctrine.

(1) In the first place John is faced with the necessity of harmonising traditional Eucharistic doctrine with his own characteristic theology, and it is probably true to say that "his Eucharistic doctrine has its birth not in any inward development of the Johannine thought; it responds to an effort made by the Evangelist to interpret after the principles of his theology a rite which he found already established in the Church."<sup>1</sup>

There are in particular two such principles in line with which the Eucharist must be interpreted:

(a) Firstly, there is John's doctrine of the Incarnation. The mystery whereby "the Logos became flesh," rather than the atonement of the Cross as for Paul, is in the Johannine theology the central fact of the work of redemption. Christ's mission was to descend from the realm of spirit into that of *flesh* to bestow upon men, in union with Himself, the "power" to escape death and attain to "eternal life." John sets the Eucharist *en rapport* with this conception. We have already suggested that herein may be the reason for the substitution of  $\sigma\acute{a}ρ\xi$  for  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  in the Eucharistic terminology. The latter means merely a "body" tangible to sense:  $\sigma\acute{a}ρ\xi$  for John is always that realm of the material, opposed to that of the Spirit, into which the Logos descended to raise men to Himself.

From this emphasis on the Incarnation it follows also that for John the Supper is a means of communion

<sup>1</sup> Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 213 f.

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not, as for Paul, with the dying Christ, but with Christ "glorified." Christ's work was to bestow life rather than to remove sin, so that His death becomes not an end in itself, a piacular offering, but rather the means whereby the limitations imposed by His earthly life are removed, and His spiritual power is released into the world (cf. xvi. 7). His death was the gateway into a larger life alike for Himself and for His own. It was but the prelude, though a necessary prelude, to His "spiritual reincarnation" in the Christian Church.

Hence no doubt the dissociation by John of Eucharistic teaching from its usual setting in Passion Week. The Evangelist suggests indeed that Christ is the true Paschal lamb, so that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." "In this indirect way John sets himself in line with the Pauline view of the death of Christ, suggesting it, as it were, in the background, as the complement and the presupposition of his own doctrine."<sup>1</sup> But having made this concession he prefers to divorce the Sacrament so far as possible from its traditional connection with Christ's death. It was only *after* that death that full spiritual communion of believers with their Lord was possible (xvi. 7). The account of the Institution at the Last Supper is deliberately omitted; there is no mention of the covenant cup, and though a substitute is in part provided in the Vine-symbolism of chapter xv. that symbolism, as John employs it, admits of no reference to the sacrificial significance of the shed blood; the Supper is no longer a commemorative

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

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rite, but the channel through which is bestowed the gift of "eternal life."

(b) For the second governing principle of John's theology is this conception of "life." The word is one of three chief categories (the others being "truth" and "light") under which the content of the word "Logos," found only in the Prologue, reappears in the body of the Gospel. If the "Logos became flesh," we see how naturally the "eating of the flesh of the Son of man" lends itself as an acted parable of the appropriation of the Logos-life. John gives us no exact definition of what he means by "life," for xvii. 3 defines not "life" itself but the means of its communication, and "life" is something more than the knowledge of God through Christ by which it is conditioned and mediated. In God, the supreme "reality," and in the Logos, who is the "light" revealing Him, there exists a "life," different in kind from mere physical life, which is the "real" or "eternal" life. The attainment of this "eternal life" is according to John determined not by any redemptive transaction, but by the communication of the divine life through the agency of Christ, and its appropriation by the individual believer. Hence the Wine-symbolism is transferred from the covenant-cup, symbolical of atonement, to the figure of the Vine in which the life-giving sap passes from the stem into the branches; while the bread-symbolism is associated, not with the Supper immediately before Jesus' death, but with the life-giving miracle of the feeding of the multitude. For John the communication of

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this "life" is the essence of the salvation process and the one purpose of the Sacrament, which for him "is as it were a résumé or an allegory of the whole religious life."<sup>1</sup> Hence other features drop into the background. The eschatological interest, dominant in the Synoptics, is absent and there is no reference to the coming Kingdom of which the Supper is a foretaste. Neither is there present, save possibly as a secondary inference from the allegory of the Vine, any thought of the unity of believers as realised in the Sacrament, though elsewhere the Evangelist is much preoccupied with this very thought. "We can only conclude that the writer was so intent upon the new emphasis that he wished to convey, that any reference to other ideas that might attach to the symbol, even ideas which he himself valued highly, would seem only an embarrassment to his purpose."<sup>2</sup>

In places John appears to regard "life" as an almost semi-physical bestowment. The Logos incarnate was the repository of a higher nature different in kind from that of men, and men to possess this life must become incorporate with Christ and absorb His divine substance into their own nature. The means of the appropriation of this life is often stated to be faith (iii. 15 etc.). But no conception of faith could seem adequate to one holding such a notion of "life." How through any act of belief can a man so become incorporate with Christ that the divine may pass into the human nature? The

<sup>1</sup> Goguel, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Dodd, *in loc. cit.*, p. 536.

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Eucharistic idea would lend itself readily as a solution of this riddle, and it is in his endeavour to solve the problem set by his own semi-physical idea of "life" that John is led at times into a realistic conception of the sacraments which appears out of harmony with the main tenor of his thought. To John "the bread and the wine had a real validity. In more than a symbolical sense they stood for the flesh and blood, the actual Person, of Christ, Who thus made it possible that believers in all times and places should participate in Himself. Only by a mystical doctrine of this nature could John overcome the difficulty that was involved in his view of life as a semi-physical essence."<sup>1</sup> There is a sense in which it must be admitted that John's realistic sacramentalism is not merely a concession to popular beliefs, but a corollary to one of his own most characteristic conceptions, the idea that salvation consists in the appropriation of "life."

(2) In the second place John's sacramental teaching is expounded in relation to certain current controversies :

(a) And firstly in opposition to objections on the part of non-Christians, principally Jews. That the Jewish-Christian controversy was likely to come to a head on the subject of the Eucharist is shown by Origen's allusion<sup>2</sup> to the taunts of the Jews of his own day about "Thyestean feasts." Accordingly John asserts with an almost aggressive emphasis the necessity of the Christian sacraments. In the face

<sup>1</sup> Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> Celsus, vi., 27.

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of opposition his orthodoxy hardens into moulds which hardly fit his own characteristically spiritual doctrine. The blind man (ix. 7) must "go, wash"—submit to the rite of baptism—before the perfection of the new life and light comes to him, and only those whom Jesus "washes" are worthy to "share His lot" (xiii. 8). Baptism is necessary not only as the seal of the saving life but as the perfecting instrument of it. Similarly with regard to the Eucharist it is asserted with an almost bigoted insistence that "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life within you" (vi. 53). The language is much too definite and realistic to admit of a purely symbolical and spiritual interpretation. John makes no attempt to answer the objections of the Jews, save to hint (vi. 43 ff.) that the mysteries of which he speaks are comprehensible only to enlightened faith, and to reaffirm with all possible force the orthodox Christian position. The material elements represent the flesh and blood of Christ; He is present not merely by way of symbol but actually, and His disciples by partaking of them—and generally speaking only so, for the rite is the seal of those who are Christ's "own"—become incorporated with His higher nature and appropriate His life.

Jewish opposition to the Sacrament would also of course have its ground in an inadequate view of the Person of Christ. To the Jew Jesus was mere man: "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph? We know His father and mother. . . . How can He give us His flesh to eat?" (vi. 42, 52). Merely on

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natural and physical grounds the realist view of the Sacrament is a sheer impossibility. In opposition to this "earthly" view the Evangelist declares uncompromisingly both the divine origin of Christ (vi. 51) and His actual presence in the Eucharist. "The initiates must not only take part in the Eucharist, but they must hold quite clearly and firmly that they are actually partaking of the real body and blood of the Lord. Without such a Sacrament, so understood, there is no salvation, no inoculation with the divine substance, no immortality . . . The substitution of  $\tau\rho\omega\gamma\epsilon\nu$ , 'devour,' for the milder  $\phi\alpha\gamma\epsilon\nu$ , 'eat,' adds an almost savage force to the insistence on the reality of the Sacrament and the denial of anything short of the actual physical consumption of the divine substance."<sup>1</sup> But once again we feel that it is only the strength of the opposition which has driven John to so uncompromising an assertion of a point of view which is hardly his own.

(b) Secondly, we are conscious of a polemical purpose directed against what to John appeared dangerous doctrinal tendencies within the Christian community, and it is in opposition to these tendencies that the converse, not to say contradictory, side of John's sacramental doctrine is developed. Inevitably many of the Christian converts in Asia Minor would carry into the Church materialistic and magical notions of sacramental grace derived from the pagan Mysteries, according to which a mysterious efficacy attached to the mere performance of a rite apart

<sup>1</sup> Naish, *in. loc. cit.*, p. 62.

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from the state of heart of the participant. Hence, alongside of what appears an almost crude realism, we find John constantly emphasising the ethical side of the sacraments. He recognises the danger to true religion of rites observed, as already they were wont to be, in a mechanical and superstitious spirit. A sacrament, however essential in itself, when it becomes a mere formality "is of no avail at all" (vi. 63). Thus John deliberately notes that "Jesus Himself did not baptize" (iv. 2); it was to renew men morally and spiritually, not to perform rites, that Christ came. Here, too, is undoubtedly to be found the reason for the substitution of the feet-washing for the Synoptic account of the Institution. In the most decisive manner the outward rite is subordinated to the ethic and spirit which ought to belong to the communicant; in place of the institution of a liturgy we have the simple commandment of love: "By this everyone will recognise that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (vi. 35).

We conclude then that for John the spiritual interpretation of sacramental efficacy is both primary and ultimate. "It is his usual plan, when he has said anything which may tend to confirm ritualism, . . . to supplement it with an antidote."<sup>1</sup> Immediately following the uncompromising realism of vi. 53 ff., and the resulting defection of many disciples, we have an equally uncompromising assertion, "What gives life is the Spirit: flesh is of no avail at all"—as if to hint that words, borrowed

<sup>1</sup> Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

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it may be from common Eucharistic usage, must not be taken in a narrowly literalistic sense. The external rite is but a symbol of which the reality is the personal union with the Master's spirit. In passages such as vi. 53 ff. the popular conceptions of the Sacrament, even when they clash with John's own, and current language about the Eucharist, even when seemingly crudely realistic, are deliberately accepted and employed, but only that they may be forthwith interpreted and spiritualised.

The influence on John of the Mystery-Religions is probably less than, considering his environment, we might reasonably expect. Again it must be remembered that the use of much of the actual terminology of the Mysteries does not necessarily involve the adoption of the ideas which it expresses. From the circumstances of the case more subject to heathen influence than Paul, John in his essential thought appears to have been even less contaminated by it—if only because to an extent greater than Paul he has become *aware* of the problems involved. It is just such magical notions of the sacraments as are characteristic of the Mysteries, that John sets himself to combat. At the same time it must be confessed that the Evangelist is not altogether untainted by the very ideas which he seeks to correct. Just as his ideas of "life" are metaphysical as well as moral, so are his ideas of the sacraments material as well as spiritual. But though the material side of the Sacrament might be an unquestioned reality, its peculiar worth, as is also true for John in the case of miracle and even of

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historical incidents in general, is in the underlying spiritual "truth."

Yet the ambiguity of John's teaching was fraught with dangerous results. It quickly became evident that the popular tendencies which John sought to check had in fact been stimulated by his teaching. "The spiritual implications on which John had laid the chief emphasis were more and more confused with the outward ordinance, till the distinction between symbol and reality was lost sight of altogether. . . . The 'spiritual Gospel' had its outcome not in the purer, more vital religion which the writer dreamed of, but in the ritualism and lifeless externalism of the later Catholic Church."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the Christian conscience has been right in regarding the Fourth Evangelist as the supreme teacher on the sacraments. We see in his Gospel, interwoven with his characteristic emphasis on the spirit, the recognition that man after all is body as well as spirit, and that to have its full effect an "inward and spiritual grace" must have as its seal the "outward and visible sign." His teaching, too, has a peculiar value for our own day, for he attempts, though it may be not always successfully, to mediate between two tendencies. His teaching is "remote alike from the materialism of those who regard the rite as in itself efficacious, and the unhealthy spirituality of those who regard the rite as superfluous and indifferent."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it is just for this reason that his sacramental teaching

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 128, 132.

<sup>2</sup> Percy Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

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will appeal to the modern mind. While protesting against a crude sacramentalism, he yet insists upon the necessity of sacraments if the Church is to endure as the visible expression of the body of Christ. John was ever mindful that "the Logos was made flesh"; as Dr. Percy Gardner has well put it, the Christian doctrine of the sacraments was for the Ephesian Evangelist, as surely it should be for us, "pure spirituality humanised."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Id.*, p. 212.

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